

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 65

47TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2006

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACEQUIA CULTURE WITHIN THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO AND RECOMMENDING THAT AN ACEQUIA HOLIDAY BE DECLARED THE THIRD FRIDAY OF EVERY APRIL.

WHEREAS, the historic role of acequias in New Mexico has been significant and impressive, and the acequia can be accurately described as the birthplace of a community; and

WHEREAS, after more than four centuries, the acequias have withstood the test of time, making them the oldest water management institutions in the United States, with strong historical ties to the even more ancient systems of medieval Europe and northern Africa; and

WHEREAS, currently, over one thousand acequias imprinting the rural landscapes of New Mexico have survived virtually intact through a succession of political, legal and

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1 administrative changes during Spanish, Mexican, territorial and
2 statehood periods, and the acequia has been the main force
3 establishing the distinct place and boundaries of communities;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, acequias are self-governing institutions and have
6 continuously performed essential services for the communities
7 that they founded, enabling agricultural production, sustaining
8 popular participation, promoting income distribution and equity
9 and protecting watershed resources; and

10 WHEREAS, technological, economic, demographic and social
11 changes have produced pressures and uncertainties beyond the
12 acequias' control; and

13 WHEREAS, the traditional system of common property placed
14 a value on a set of communal rights and responsibilities that
15 has been challenged by another value system that views acequia
16 water rights as a commodity, putting at risk the acequias both
17 as physical watercourses and as democratic institutions for
18 local water management; and

19 WHEREAS, the annual cleaning of the acequia was and still
20 is one of the most important events in New Mexico communities,
21 and the cleaning of the acequia not only marks the beginning of
22 the agricultural season, it is also an occasion for the vecinos
23 to address other local issues, reconfirming the sense of
24 tradition that undergirds the social and political life of the
25 community; and

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1 WHEREAS, at the time of this annual ritual, parciantes
2 renew their strong attachment to the locality, assuring the
3 continuance of a place for yet another cycle of irrigation;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
5 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the third Friday of every April be set
6 aside to recognize the contributions of acequia culture to New
7 Mexico; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that counties, municipalities and
9 state agencies that employ acequia parciantes be encouraged to
10 grant paid administrative leave to these employees so that they
11 may participate in their annual limpieza; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to the governor and the acequia commission for
14 appropriate distribution.