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HOUSE MEMORIAL 31

52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2015

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE TRAGEDY OF THE 1980 PRISON RIOT AT THE
PENITENTIARY OF NEW MEXICO, ACKNOWLEDGING BOTH THE INMATES
WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST AND THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS WHO WERE
HELD HOSTAGE AND EXPRESSING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES'
COMMITMENT TO GREATER PUBLIC SAFETY.

WHEREAS, from February 2 to February 4, 1980, the
penitentiary of New Mexico was the site of what remains one of
the most savage and deadly prison riots in this nation's
history; and

WHEREAS, a combination of overcrowding, lack of programs,
poor living conditions and unsatisfactory food led to the riot
and the ensuing thirty-six-hour siege of the prison; and

WHEREAS, during those horrific hours, thirty-three inmates
were killed and at least ninety were seriously injured by

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1 fellow inmates, and fourteen corrections officers were held
2 hostage, assaulted or injured by rioting inmates; and

3 WHEREAS, the corrections department since that time and
4 under the current leadership of Secretary of Corrections Gregg
5 Marcantel has worked to ensure that the combination of
6 conditions that led to the riot is never created again and that
7 inmates are provided with the proper balance of social control
8 and support and given the best opportunity possible to
9 successfully integrate into society, not re-offend and become
10 contributing taxpayers rather than tax liabilities; and

11 WHEREAS, the legislature recognizes that a properly
12 functioning corrections system is one that safely and humanely
13 incarcerates those persons who must be separated from society
14 and educates, trains and supports the overwhelming number of
15 inmates who will return to society; and

16 WHEREAS, in recognition that corrections officers are
17 among the bravest, most dedicated public servants and face some
18 of the most difficult working conditions, the names of the
19 corrections officers who were taken hostage during the 1980
20 prison riot while in service to the people of New Mexico are
21 hereby recognized: Captain Greg Roybal, Lieutenant Jose Anaya,
22 Medical Technician Ross Maez and Corrections Officers Victor
23 Gallegos, Elton Curry, Juan Bustos, Michael Hernandez, Ronnie
24 Martinez, Michael Schmitt, Valentin Martinez, Antonio Vigil,
25 Larry Mendoza, Edward Ortega and Ramon Gutierrez; and

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1 WHEREAS, the corrections department's commitment to
2 ensuring that the conditions that led to the riot never exist
3 again is an integral part of the corrections department's
4 philosophy, particularly under the leadership of Secretary
5 Marcantel, and has manifested itself in everything from the
6 continuing revitalization of the prison building, "Old Main",
7 to support for meaningful inmate programming; and

8 WHEREAS, the corrections department recognizes the thirty-
9 fifth anniversary of the prison riot and commits to respecting
10 the past to create a better future by using this tragedy to
11 educate, inform and involve the public in the importance of
12 prison accountability, programming and public safety;

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
14 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the tragedy of
15 the 1980 prison riot at the penitentiary of New Mexico and the
16 men who were killed, injured and taken hostage during the riot
17 not be forgotten; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the corrections department's
19 commitment to increasing public safety through lower recidivism
20 rates and improved rehabilitation of inmates be commended; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives
22 express its support for increased public safety; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that continued awareness of the
24 1980 prison riot and the events leading up to it serve to
25 strengthen the commitment of government leaders to advocate for

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1 the fundamental rights and dignity of all, including crime
2 victims, correctional professionals and each inmate assigned to
3 the responsibility of the state; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the governor and the corrections department.

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