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HOUSE MEMORIAL 51

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

INTRODUCED BY

Terry H. McMillan

A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE LAS CRUCES FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE FIREFIGHTERS  
AND CREWS INVOLVED IN THE VECINO PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the Las Cruces fire department operates a  
program, which serves as a lifeline to many homebound  
individuals with no relatives in the area, called the vecino  
program; and

WHEREAS, the program involves firefighters and crews  
making daily phone calls to check on the health and well-being  
of the individuals involved in the program; and

WHEREAS, the program got its start in the spring of 1995,  
when a call was received in fire station number one from a  
woman who was worried about her elderly neighbor whose light  
was on at 4:00 a.m.; and

WHEREAS, upon responding to the call, the firefighters

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1 discovered an elderly woman who was unconscious and had  
2 suffered serious blood loss due to an injury; and

3 WHEREAS, when the woman recovered from her injuries, a  
4 firefighter made a telephone call to check up on her, and that  
5 call was the beginning of the vecino program; and

6 WHEREAS, the program expanded as firefighters were  
7 transferred from one station to another, initiating the phone  
8 calls at their new stations; and

9 WHEREAS, the vecino program has served as many as thirty-  
10 five individuals; and

11 WHEREAS, phone calls are made daily, three hundred sixty-  
12 five days a year, usually around 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., taking  
13 from ten to thirty minutes to complete a round of calls; and

14 WHEREAS, according to Robert Galaz, who has headed the  
15 vecino program for the last six years, firefighters find the  
16 phone calls rewarding and frustrating, aware that they are  
17 making an important difference in the lives of lonely people,  
18 but recognizing that the individuals' needs often far exceed  
19 the firefighters' ability to address them; and

20 WHEREAS, many firefighters have established personal  
21 relationships with the individuals they call, involving them in  
22 family events and visiting them at their homes; and

23 WHEREAS, the program was named vecino after the Spanish  
24 word for neighbor, and the firefighters and crews of the Las  
25 Cruces fire department are certainly serving as neighbors to

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1 people who otherwise would have no one to talk to on a daily  
2 basis;

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
4 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Las Cruces  
5 fire department and the firefighters and crews involved in the  
6 vecino program be honored; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
8 transmitted to fire chief Travis Brown for distribution to all  
9 of the firefighters and crews who participate in this valuable  
10 community service.