

1 SENATE MEMORIAL 113

2 **53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2017**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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9  
10 A MEMORIAL

11 HONORING VICTORIA CHAVEZ, GINA MICHELLE VALDEZ, CINNAMON ELKS,  
12 JULIE CYNDIE NIETO AND THE NINE "JANE DOES" OF THE WEST MESA  
13 MASS GRAVE.

14  
15 WHEREAS, in 2009, the Albuquerque police department  
16 unearthed the remains of thirteen individuals buried in an  
17 apparent mass grave on the west mesa of Albuquerque; and

18 WHEREAS, it is believed that most of the remains belong to  
19 women who were buried there by the same individual or  
20 individuals; and

21 WHEREAS, according to a February 2016 *Albuquerque Journal*  
22 story, only one Albuquerque police department detective  
23 remained assigned to investigate the deaths of the women buried  
24 in the west mesa mass grave; and

25 WHEREAS, Victoria Chavez, who was last seen in 2003 and

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1 reported missing in 2004, was the first woman whose remains  
2 were identified by police; Gina Michelle Valdez, who had been  
3 missing since September 2004, was the second woman whose  
4 remains were identified by police; Cinnamon Elks, who had been  
5 missing since 2004, was the third woman whose remains were  
6 identified by police; and Julie Cyndie Nieto, who had been  
7 missing since 2004, was the fourth woman whose remains were  
8 identified by police; and

9 WHEREAS, the Albuquerque police department compiled a list  
10 of women who have been reported missing, which includes Darlene  
11 Maria Trujillo, missing since 2001; Sonia Bernadette Lente,  
12 missing since 2002; Monica Diana Candelaria, missing since  
13 2003; Jamie Barela, missing since 2004; Virginia Ann Cloven,  
14 missing since 2004; Doreen Márquez, missing since 2004; Anselma  
15 Guerra, missing since 2004; Evelyn Jesúsmaria Salazar, missing  
16 since 2004; Veronica Romero, missing since 2004; Anna Vigil,  
17 missing since 2005; Shawntell Waites, missing since 2005; Nina  
18 Herron, missing since 2005; Felipa Gonzales, missing since  
19 2005; and Leah Rachelle Peebles, missing since 2006; and

20 WHEREAS, families of missing women from across New Mexico  
21 file missing persons reports with police, to no avail, and  
22 these families continue to search, in agony and without  
23 support, for their loved ones; and

24 WHEREAS, according to the federal bureau of  
25 investigation's national crime information center, there were

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1 fifty thousand nine hundred thirty active adult missing persons  
2 cases reported in the United States as of January 2007; and

3 WHEREAS, the women whose remains were identified in the  
4 west mesa mass grave site were depicted by both the police and  
5 many members of the media not as victims of violence and crime,  
6 but rather as criminals themselves; and

7 WHEREAS, the labeling of these victims creates an  
8 atmosphere of ambivalence with regard to the crimes that have  
9 been perpetrated against them, while also denying their  
10 humanity and their role in our communities as daughters,  
11 mothers, sisters, cousins, nieces and granddaughters; and

12 WHEREAS, the deceased and missing women of New Mexico  
13 deserve diligence and respect under the law and in our public  
14 discourse, while their families deserve the right to carry  
15 their memories with dignity; and

16 WHEREAS, communities across New Mexico are seeking further  
17 details and a more thorough explanation of the Albuquerque  
18 police department's and the federal bureau of investigation's  
19 treatment of the crimes committed against these women, in  
20 relation to the collection of evidence at the mass grave and in  
21 relation to the methods that were used to determine the facts  
22 of the disappearances; and

23 WHEREAS, New Mexico persistently has one of the nation's  
24 highest rates of women living in poverty, one of the highest  
25 rates of female homicide victims and the second-highest

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1 domestic violence rate in the United States; and

2 WHEREAS, thousands of New Mexico women are not safe in  
3 their own homes, in their intimate relationships or in public  
4 spaces, and they lack the resources they need to escape the  
5 cycle of violence that traps them;

6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
7 OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition of the heinous crimes that  
8 have been perpetrated against Victoria Chavez, Gina Michelle  
9 Valdez, Cinnamon Elks, Julie Cyndie Nieto and the nine other  
10 "Jane Does" of the west mesa mass grave and in recognition of  
11 the missing women of New Mexico whose loss continues to be felt  
12 in communities across the state, the Albuquerque police  
13 department and the Bernalillo county sheriff's department be  
14 urged to proceed with due diligence in resolving these murders;  
15 and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the mayor of Albuquerque and  
17 the members of the Bernalillo county board of commissioners  
18 join in the effort proposed by this resolution to ensure that  
19 these crimes are thoroughly investigated and that the resources  
20 of the federal bureau of investigation, the Albuquerque police  
21 department and the Bernalillo county sheriff's department be  
22 employed in the most expeditious manner possible; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the media change its focus  
24 from an emphasis on the victims' characters and lifestyles to  
25 the provision of details of the heinous crimes that resulted in

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1 the mass grave on the west mesa of Albuquerque; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state of New Mexico ensure  
3 that services be available for addiction treatment and  
4 rehabilitation for women in need of such services and that  
5 state policy and funding be directed toward providing those  
6 services to the women who need them rather than toward the  
7 criminalization and incarceration of those women; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all New Mexicans be encouraged  
9 to show their support for women who are victims of violence or  
10 who are missing and for their families; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
12 transmitted to the mayor of Albuquerque, the chair of the  
13 Bernalillo county board of commissioners, the chief of the  
14 Albuquerque police department and the Bernalillo county  
15 sheriff.