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HOUSE MEMORIAL 39

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO
INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF NEW DEAL ART TO BE LOCATED IN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUILDING IN THE MUSEUM HILL NEIGHBORHOOD OF SANTA FE.

WHEREAS, in the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
proposed a program referred to as the new deal to help pull the
United States out of the great depression; and

WHEREAS, as part of the new deal, President Roosevelt
created the works progress administration by executive order on
May 6, 1935; and

WHEREAS, the works progress administration was an
ambitious employment and infrastructure program and over its
eight years of existence put roughly eight million five hundred
thousand Americans to work at a time when over eleven million

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1 people were unemployed; and

2 WHEREAS, thousands of artists, architects, craftsmen,
3 construction workers and educators found jobs in works progress
4 administration projects, which flourished during the great
5 depression; and

6 WHEREAS, in roughly the first four months of 1934, the
7 public works of art project hired three thousand seven hundred
8 forty-nine artists and produced fifteen thousand six hundred
9 sixty-three paintings, murals, prints, crafts and sculptures
10 for government buildings around the country; and

11 WHEREAS, two of the works progress administration's most
12 successful artists were the young Mark Rothko and Jackson
13 Pollock; and

14 WHEREAS, Mark Rothko worked for the works progress
15 administration from 1936 to 1937 and got his first commissions
16 for his abstract expressionism art through the program; and

17 WHEREAS, Jackson Pollock spent eight years working for the
18 works progress administration, along with his wife and fellow
19 abstract expressionist, Lee Krasner, and both remained with the
20 works progress administration until 1943; and

21 WHEREAS, Dorothea Lange is one of the most influential
22 photographers of the federal art project, known for her
23 compelling images of the dust bowl and images of struggling
24 farm families and migrant workers in California; and

25 WHEREAS, Walker Evans's photographs of small towns and

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1 tenant farmers in West Virginia for the federal art project
2 made him one of the most celebrated American new deal
3 photographers; and

4 WHEREAS, Dutch artist Willem de Kooning credited his time
5 with the works progress administration, from 1935 to 1937, for
6 teaching him to think of himself as an artist first; and

7 WHEREAS, Diego Rivera, a world famous muralist, had
8 important works of public art commissioned under the auspices
9 of the works progress administration in 1939 and 1949; and

10 WHEREAS, the Indian arts and crafts board hired many
11 notable Native American artists, such as New Mexico's Pop
12 Chalee and Pablita Velarde; and

13 WHEREAS, in New Mexico, Allan Houser, known worldwide
14 later in life as a master sculptor, painted traditional two-
15 dimensional works of art as part of the new deal programs; and

16 WHEREAS, Gene Kloss of Taos is best known for her etchings
17 and created a new deal etching, "Christmas Eve, Taos Pueblo",
18 which is part of a group of nine etchings of New Mexico scenes;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, the area coordinator for the works progress
21 administration's public works of art project was woodblock
22 printer, painter and marionette-maker Gustave Baumann, a
23 leading member of the Santa Fe art community; and

24 WHEREAS, other notable new deal artists out of the more
25 than ten thousand artists who were commissioned to work for the

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1 federal art project were Gertrude Abercrombie, Benjamin
2 Abramowitz, Henry Bannarn, Patricino Barela, Harrison Begay,
3 John Steuart Curry, Marsden Hartley, Sargent Claude Johnson,
4 Helmuth Naumer, Louise Nevelson, Elizabeth Olds, John French
5 Sloan, Ralph Stackpole, Elizabeth Terrell and Mark Voris; and

6 WHEREAS, other new deal artists went on to successful
7 careers in their chosen fields, and the work of these artists
8 is worthy of inclusion in a national museum of new deal art;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, as weapons production for World War II began
11 ramping up and unemployment dropped, the federal government
12 decided a national relief program was no longer needed and the
13 works progress administration shut down in June 1943; and

14 WHEREAS, although many new deal treasures still exist in
15 museums and public buildings today, some have been painted
16 over, destroyed or stolen; and

17 WHEREAS, it is imperative that the history of new deal art
18 be preserved; and

19 WHEREAS, museum hill in Santa Fe is home to four world-
20 class museums: the museum of Indian arts and culture, the
21 museum of international folk art, the Wheelwright museum of the
22 American Indian and the museum of Spanish colonial art; and

23 WHEREAS, visitors to museum hill can also experience a
24 unique shopping experience at the Case trading post, built to
25 resemble a turn-of-the-century Navajo reservation trading post,

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1 and enjoy the cuisine and ambiance of the museum hill cafe; and

2 WHEREAS, next to museum hill is one of Santa Fe's iconic
3 buildings, the former national park service building, at 1100
4 old Santa Fe trail; and

5 WHEREAS, the twenty-four-thousand-square-foot adobe
6 building was built between 1937 and 1939 by the new deal's
7 civilian conservation corps, and most of the two hundred
8 civilian conservation corps members were young men from
9 Hispanic families in the Santa Fe area; and

10 WHEREAS, the national park service building, with its
11 significant works progress administration history, would be an
12 ideal location for a national museum of new deal art; and

13 WHEREAS, tourism is big business in New Mexico, and
14 tourism is a key contributor to the state's economy; and

15 WHEREAS, the tourism department reports that the state's
16 tourism industry had a six-billion-six-hundred-million-dollar
17 (\$6,600,000,000) impact on the New Mexico economy in 2017, the
18 largest in state history; and

19 WHEREAS, tourism department statistics also cite visitor
20 spending in 2017 that generated six hundred sixty-two million
21 dollars (\$662,000,000) in state and local taxes and that
22 sustained ninety-four thousand jobs; and

23 WHEREAS, a national museum of new deal art, located in the
24 national park service building next to museum hill, has the
25 potential of being a significant tourist destination and source

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1 of additional state revenue;

2 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico
4 congressional delegation be requested to investigate the
5 possibility of establishing a national museum of new deal art
6 to be located in the national park service building in the
7 museum hill neighborhood of Santa Fe; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
9 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
10 delegation and the secretary of tourism.