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HOUSE MEMORIAL 73

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

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO CENTER FOR HEALTH
POLICY AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN BUDGET AND POLICY INSTITUTE
CONDUCT AN INDIGENOUS-PEOPLES-LED COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS
ASSESSMENT ON THE ECONOMIC, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL AND
SOCIAL COSTS OF ENERGY EXTRACTION AND FOSSIL FUEL IMPACTS TO
THE LAND, PEOPLE, WORKERS, WATER AND AIR IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES
IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is home to twenty-three sovereign
indigenous nations, tribes and pueblos, including the pueblos
of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris,
Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Ana, Santa
Clara, Taos, Tesuque, Zia and Zuni, Kewa Pueblo and Ohkay
Owingeh; the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache
Tribe and the Fort Sill Apache Tribe; and the Navajo Nation,

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1 who speak the languages of Tiwa, Towa, Tewa, Keres, Zuni,
2 Jicarilla Apache, Mescalero Apache, Chiricahua Warm Springs
3 Apache and Dine and who represent nearly ten and one-half
4 percent of the population in New Mexico; and

5 WHEREAS, indigenous peoples have lived in their ancestral
6 homelands since before national claims to this territory were
7 made by Spain, Mexico and the United States and before the
8 establishment of the state of New Mexico; and

9 WHEREAS, traditional knowledge, including the cultural and
10 religious values, languages, beliefs, practices, sciences and
11 histories of indigenous peoples, are inherently and intimately
12 tied to the land, territories and resources upon which the
13 knowledge systems are built; and

14 WHEREAS, indigenous peoples in New Mexico are strong,
15 proud and resilient and continue to maintain and build upon
16 their ancestral traditional knowledge systems, retaining
17 practices, prayers, ceremonies, worldviews and connections to
18 the earth, which are vital for comprehensive and integrated
19 environmental management that is important to the preservation,
20 restoration and sustainability of ecosystems, waterways and
21 cultural-biological diversity that is vital for climate change
22 adaptation and mitigation and ensuring that future generations
23 inherit a healthy world; and

24 WHEREAS, the United Nations intergovernmental panel on
25 climate change 2014 report, *Impacts, Adaptation, and*

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1 *Vulnerability: Summary for Policymakers*, highlights the need
2 to respect the equity of indigenous knowledge systems and
3 western science by stating that "Indigenous, local, and
4 traditional knowledge systems and practices, including
5 indigenous peoples' holistic view of community and environment,
6 are a major resource for adapting to climate change, but these
7 have not been used consistently in existing adaptation efforts.
8 Integrating such forms of knowledge with existing practices
9 increases the effectiveness of adaptation"; and

10 WHEREAS, indigenous peoples honor and utilize sacred
11 places and culturally important landscapes and waterways for
12 prayer, places of pilgrimage and collection of medicines and
13 herbs on ceded and unceded lands throughout the Colorado
14 plateau, in places such as Chaco canyon, mount Taylor, Bears
15 Ears, the Jemez plateau, the San Juan river, the Rio Grande
16 and the Valles Caldera; and

17 WHEREAS, investments in extractive economies have created
18 opportunity but have also incurred costs and undermined
19 traditional economic lifeways, including farming and
20 agriculture, that have been compromised because of contaminated
21 soils; and

22 WHEREAS, mining and extractive industries routinely go
23 through boom-and-bust cycles that leave behind contamination,
24 workers without jobs, lost revenue and general economic
25 instability that may result in increased levels of alcoholism,

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1 homelessness, violence, increased incarceration and drug use;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, there are over two hundred fifty-nine abandoned
4 uranium mines in and around indigenous communities in New
5 Mexico, one hundred thirty-seven of which have no record of any
6 reclamation, and five hundred twenty-three abandoned uranium
7 mines on the Navajo Nation that continue to leak and spread
8 contamination through waterways, air and soil; and

9 WHEREAS, cumulative and multiple exposures over time to
10 environmental pollution affect every aspect of community life,
11 including health, work and standard of living; cause loss of
12 human, plant and animal life; and decrease biological diversity
13 that is important to the sustainability of all life; and

14 WHEREAS, the United Nations local communities and
15 indigenous peoples platform was established to facilitate the
16 participation of indigenous peoples in guiding the
17 implementation of climate change adaptation strategies and
18 goals important to achieving greenhouse gas emission
19 reductions, emphasizing the need to implement and honor the
20 United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples
21 and the inclusion of traditional knowledge systems and
22 practitioners in decision-making processes; and

23 WHEREAS, indigenous youth deserve the right of equitable
24 access to educational programs, as well as knowledge of
25 cultural roles and responsibilities, in order to provide them

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1 with the foundation of their identities, languages and
2 histories so that indigenous youth can rise above educational
3 challenges and high suicide rates; and

4 WHEREAS, indigenous communities have suffered
5 environmental disasters such as the 2015 Gold King mine spill,
6 which released three million gallons of acidic water and heavy
7 metals into the San Juan river and created lead levels twelve
8 thousand times the normal amount and contaminated the water
9 with arsenic, mercury and other toxic substances; and the
10 Church Rock uranium mill tailings spill of 1979, which stands
11 as the largest release of radioactive material in the United
12 States, releasing more than ninety-four million gallons of
13 toxic waste and one thousand one hundred tons of radioactive
14 tailings directly into the Rio Puerco, which flows through many
15 communities across McKinley county and which destroyed water
16 used by indigenous farmers and remains the main pathway of
17 exposure to uranium contamination in communities along the Rio
18 Puerco; and

19 WHEREAS, indigenous peoples' way of life and spirituality
20 require clean air and water and a healthy land base in order to
21 live and thrive, and the protection of natural resources and
22 natural elements is vital to cultural sustainability for
23 indigenous peoples of this land; and

24 WHEREAS, indigenous communities should not be forced to
25 choose among creating sustainable development, having a healthy

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1 economy or maintaining a clean and safe environment, and
2 indigenous communities need regenerative economic investments
3 that consider long-term social and cultural impacts as well as
4 economic sustainability;

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
6 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the university
7 of New Mexico center for health policy and the Native American
8 budget and policy institute be requested to conduct a
9 comprehensive needs assessment in partnership with impacted
10 indigenous communities and produce a written report that
11 examines the economic, health, environmental and social costs
12 of extractive and fossil fuel impacts to the land, people,
13 workers, water and air in indigenous communities in New Mexico
14 and that includes community-based recommendations for
15 transition planning and opportunities; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
17 transmitted to the nineteen pueblos of New Mexico, the all
18 pueblo council of governors, the Indian affairs department, the
19 Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Fort
20 Sill Apache Tribe, the Navajo Nation and members of New
21 Mexico's congressional delegation.