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SENATE MEMORIAL 54

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020

INTRODUCED BY

Shannon D. Pinto

A MEMORIAL

HONORING FORTY-THREE YEARS OF SERVICE BY STATE SENATOR JOHN PINTO AND DECLARING FEBRUARY 14, 2020 "SENATOR JOHN PINTO DAY" IN THE SENATE.

WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was born in 1924 to a family of Navajo shepherders and was raised in Lupton, Arizona, and Gallup, New Mexico, and passed on May 24, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto attended a bureau of Indian affairs boarding school in Fort Defiance, Arizona, and after many unsuccessful attempts to run away, he finally graduated; and

WHEREAS, he received his bachelor's degree at the age of thirty-nine and a master's degree in elementary education from the university of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served in the United States

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1 marine corps as a Navajo code talker and, in 2001, received a
2 congressional silver medal of honor for his service as a code
3 talker; and

4 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto worked for twenty-eight years
5 in the Gallup-McKinley county school system and served as the
6 legislative liaison for the Navajo Nation division of
7 transportation beginning in October 1988; and

8 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served as president of the
9 Gallup Indian community center from 1950 through 1970, during
10 which time he helped to feed the homeless and the less-
11 fortunate families of Gallup; and

12 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served as president of the
13 Breadsprings chapter, also known as the Baahaali chapter, of
14 the Navajo Nation from 1950 to 1954; and

15 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served as secretary-treasurer
16 for the Red Rock chapter of the Navajo Nation from 1954 to
17 1960; and

18 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served as a member of the
19 eastern Navajo tribal council from 1950 to 1960; and

20 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was elected in 1972 to the
21 McKinley county board of county commissioners, where he served
22 for four years as a commissioner; and

23 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto served with distinction in the
24 New Mexico senate since his arrival in 1977, when, as a
25 hitchhiker, he was picked up in a snowstorm in Albuquerque by

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1 then fellow freshman senator Manny Aragon; and

2 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was a member of the interim
3 legislative Indian affairs committee since it was first created
4 in 1989 and was the chair of the senate Indian and cultural
5 affairs committee since its creation in 1987; and

6 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was instrumental in the
7 passage of numerous legislative initiatives, including the
8 designation, in 1987, of "American Indian Day" in New Mexico;
9 the creation, in 2004, of the first state cabinet-level Indian
10 affairs department; and the improvement of state highway 491
11 between Gallup and Shiprock; and

12 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto worked tirelessly for the
13 improvement of state highway 491 between Gallup and Shiprock,
14 which the legislature suggested, in 2003, be renamed "Senator
15 John Pinto Highway"; and

16 WHEREAS, the Native American filmmakers grant fund was
17 spearheaded by Senator John Pinto during his work in the 2019
18 legislative session; and

19 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto worked with the interim
20 legislative Indian affairs committee and with other lawmakers
21 for several months to establish the grants; and

22 WHEREAS, one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in
23 funding was made available through legislation passed in 2019;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto would annually entertain his

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1 colleagues in the senate with his rendition, in Navajo, of the
2 "potato song"; and

3 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was the senior member in the
4 senate; and

5 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was a mentor, gentleman and
6 wise leader whose kind demeanor earned him the full respect of
7 the senate; and

8 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto had been married to his wife,
9 Joann, for sixty-three years at the time of her passing; and

10 WHEREAS, Senator John Pinto was known nationwide and in
11 many foreign countries for his involvement in national
12 legislative organizations;

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
14 OF NEW MEXICO that it extend its congratulations to the family
15 of the late Senator John Pinto on his forty-three years of
16 service in the New Mexico senate, where he furthered the causes
17 of his constituents, the Navajo Nation and the people of New
18 Mexico; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that February 14, 2020 be declared
20 "Senator John Pinto Day" in the senate; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
22 transmitted to Senator Shannon D. Pinto.