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A MEMORIAL

DECLARING FEBRUARY 14, 2023 "URANIUM WORKERS DAY" IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEREAS, the Grants mineral belt, situated between Shiprock and the Pueblo of Laguna, contains one of the world's richest uranium deposits; and

WHEREAS, during a thirty-year period beginning in 1948, the Grants mineral belt produced more uranium than any other district in the world and accounted for one-third of all of the uranium produced in the United States during that period; and

WHEREAS, the history of uranium mining has involved small "mom and pop" surface and underground mines and large-scale commercial surface and underground mines; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation has identified over five hundred abandoned uranium mines on tribal lands; and

WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department has identified nearly six hundred mine and exploration sites in McKinley, Cibola and Sandoval counties alone; and

WHEREAS, a recent inventory study identified two hundred fifty-nine uranium mine sites in New Mexico and of these, one hundred thirty-seven have no record of any reclamation; and

WHEREAS, in addition to uranium mines, mills used to

1 process ore to yellowcake were constructed and operated at
2 seven sites in New Mexico; and

3 WHEREAS, the United States department of energy reports
4 that nearly twelve thousand people were employed in the
5 uranium mining and milling industry in the United States in
6 1980; and

7 WHEREAS, the energy, minerals and natural resources
8 department estimates that about seven thousand people were
9 employed in the uranium industry in New Mexico in 1978, the
10 record year for uranium production in the state; and

11 WHEREAS, limited studies on the health risks to miners
12 from uranium exposure showed that Navajo uranium miners were
13 three times more likely to die from lung cancer than the
14 United States average; and

15 WHEREAS, uranium miners were five times more likely to
16 develop lung cancer than the general population; and

17 WHEREAS, exposure to dust, gases, exhaust and fumes as
18 well as the lack of protective clothing and safety measures,
19 such as miners coming in contact with water from the mine
20 ceilings or eating their lunches while at work, can result in
21 non-malignant and malignant respiratory diseases; and

22 WHEREAS, an increased risk for kidney disease,
23 hypertension and autoimmune diseases may have occurred from
24 mining-era exposures and environmental legacy exposures; and

25 WHEREAS, the negative effects of uranium mining and

1 milling and the health impacts from working in a mine are
2 stressors for individuals and families; and

3 WHEREAS, many former workers and their families continue
4 to live in communities that have not been adequately cleaned
5 up or reclaimed and, as a result, may experience continued
6 exposure to harmful contamination in the air and environment;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
8 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that recognition
9 be extended to uranium workers and that February 14, 2023 be
10 proclaimed "Uranium Workers Day" in the house of
11 representatives; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
14 delegation, the governor of the Pueblo of Laguna, the governor
15 of the Pueblo of Acoma, the president of the Navajo Nation and
16 the county commissioners of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley
17 counties.

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