

1 A JOINT MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR TO APPOINT A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE  
3 NEEDS OF FRONTIER AREAS OF THE STATE AND TO CONSIDER THE  
4 EFFICACY OF THE COMMUNITY-OPERATED INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK  
5 MODEL FOR THE IMPROVED DELIVERY OF NECESSARY SERVICES.  
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7 WHEREAS, the term "frontier area" means the  
8 unincorporated areas of a county that are sparsely populated  
9 and isolated from larger population centers and services and  
10 includes rural communities; and

11 WHEREAS, recent public health research has added lack of  
12 municipal status as a structural determinant of health,  
13 resulting in cumulative health risks for residents due to the  
14 lack of health care resources, especially for low-income  
15 communities of color; and

16 WHEREAS, unincorporated communities do not have their  
17 own local officials and remain as informal settlements with  
18 diminished legal power to comprehensively address local needs  
19 and concerns; and

20 WHEREAS, a lack of self-governance at the local level  
21 leads to political exclusion and diminished access to not  
22 just health resources, but also access to clean drinking  
23 water; environmentally safe disposal of wastewater;  
24 communication resources, including cellular and internet  
25 service; transportation; and public facilities, such as

1 parks, playgrounds, libraries and community centers, enjoyed  
2 in more populated areas; and

3 WHEREAS, current infrastructure resources are outdated  
4 in many rural communities and frontier areas and siloed by  
5 systemic structural barriers that negatively affect the  
6 provision of services while depending almost exclusively on  
7 volunteer labor to deliver essential services to residents;  
8 and

9 WHEREAS, infrastructure and regulatory systems have  
10 become more complex, while the volunteer pool is being  
11 reduced through population loss and elderly volunteers aging  
12 out or unable to perform required skills, and younger people  
13 are unavailable to fill that volunteer gap because of longer  
14 commutes for school and careers; and

15 WHEREAS, the community-operated infrastructure network  
16 model might work well in frontier areas to increase  
17 efficiency and reduce overhead costs of individual physical  
18 and social infrastructure providers through shared services  
19 using economies of scale for administrative, financial  
20 management, capital improvement planning, permitting and  
21 other services that could be cooperatively managed for  
22 several infrastructure providers; and

23 WHEREAS, community-operated infrastructure networks  
24 could help fill the personnel gaps as well as develop  
25 methodologies and strategies for frontier areas to have

1 greater autonomy over local programs and services; and

2 WHEREAS, the community-operated infrastructure network  
3 model promises efficiencies in the delivery of needed  
4 services in frontier areas, economies of scale and trained  
5 replacements for the aging volunteer system;

6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
7 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the governor be requested to appoint  
8 an executive-wide task force to study the needs of frontier  
9 areas of the state, including members from the department of  
10 finance and administration, in particular, the local  
11 government division and the infrastructure planning and  
12 development division; the department of environment; the  
13 office of the state engineer; the department of health; the  
14 economic development department; the department of  
15 information technology; the Indian affairs department; the  
16 department of transportation; the acequia commission;  
17 community representatives of frontier areas; representatives  
18 of councils of state government; and any other state agencies  
19 and service providers the governor deems necessary to ensure  
20 that the scope and urgency of the study are addressed in a  
21 comprehensive, meaningful way; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force study the  
23 needs of frontier areas of the state, including:

24 A. determination of what government services are  
25 currently being provided to frontier areas by locale;

1           B. determination of what infrastructures are  
2 available in frontier areas by locale, and what human and  
3 other resources in each area may be tapped into to improve  
4 the delivery of services to and the quality of life of  
5 frontier area residents; and

6           C. a review of statutes and rules and their  
7 application to frontier areas and what can be amended,  
8 repealed or enacted to assist frontier areas in the  
9 provision of infrastructure and in the establishment of  
10 community-operated infrastructure networks, including what  
11 resources can be provided by the state; and

12           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study assess  
13 methodologies for strengthening frontier areas with financial  
14 investment and other resources; and

15           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study include potential  
16 incentives for frontier areas willing to establish  
17 community-operated infrastructure networks to increase  
18 efficiency and reduce overhead costs of individual  
19 infrastructure providers through shared services and consider  
20 how the state, councils of government and counties can  
21 provide funding to replace volunteers with centralized paid  
22 staff who possess the training and skills needed to operate  
23 modern infrastructure; and

24           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force provide  
25 periodic reports of its work to the legislative interim

1 committees concerned with rural economic development and  
2 other rural concerns and a final report to the governor and  
3 the legislature, with findings and recommendations, by  
4 November 1, 2025; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
6 transmitted to the governor, the department of finance and  
7 administration, the New Mexico acequia association, the  
8 New Mexico rural library initiative and the New Mexico rural  
9 water association.

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