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HOUSE MEMORIAL 26

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025**

INTRODUCED BY

E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

A MEMORIAL

DECLARING FEBRUARY 17, 2025 "VIOLA FLOREZ TIGHE DAY" IN THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEREAS, Viola Florez Tighe, the former secretary of  
higher education and a titan in the field of education in New  
Mexico, died in Albuquerque on January 21, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Vi was born in Bloomfield on July 30, 1947, one  
of twelve children born to Jose Merced Florez and Florence  
Hancock Florez; and

WHEREAS, Vi received a bachelor's degree from Fort Lewis  
college and went on to receive a master's degree in education  
from the university of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, after several years of teaching in elementary and  
middle schools, Vi received a doctor of education in curriculum  
and instruction from Texas A and M university-Kingsville; and

1           WHEREAS, Vi joined the faculty of Texas A and M  
2 university, where she received the outstanding new faculty  
3 award in 1985 and the distinguished teaching award in 1987; and

4           WHEREAS, after serving as interim dean and acting vice  
5 president of Texas A and M university, Vi returned to New  
6 Mexico in 1997 to teach at the university of New Mexico; and

7           WHEREAS, at the university of New Mexico, she was the dean  
8 of the college of education from 1997 until 2008, served twice  
9 as provost, held the PNM endowed chair in 2009 and was named  
10 dean emerita in 2019; and

11           WHEREAS, in 2008, Vi was appointed secretary of higher  
12 education by Governor Bill Richardson and served until 2010;  
13 and

14           WHEREAS, Vi was a mentor and advocate for countless  
15 students, faculty and employees of the university of New Mexico  
16 and served as the first Latina provost in the state; and

17           WHEREAS, Vi served as a member of the board of directors  
18 of the university of New Mexico retiree association and chaired  
19 its legislative committee, securing the rights of all to  
20 pension and retirement benefits; and

21           WHEREAS, Vi was a member of the Hispanic women's council  
22 from 2006 until 2021, serving as president in 2014 and  
23 receiving the las primeras award in 2008 and the estrella  
24 brillante award in 2015; and

25           WHEREAS, Vi received numerous awards during her storied

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1 career, including the university of New Mexico alumni lobo  
2 award in 2007 and the New Mexico distinguished public service  
3 award in 2008; and

4 WHEREAS, Vi held a lifelong passion for education, and her  
5 contributions to the field, including numerous publications,  
6 have left a lasting legacy throughout the state; and

7 WHEREAS, Vi enjoyed gardening and spending time with her  
8 grandchildren; and

9 WHEREAS, Vi was preceded in death by her father, Jose  
10 Merced Florez, and her brother, Reverend Marc Florez; and

11 WHEREAS, Vi is survived by her husband of forty-four  
12 years, Girard Tighe; her children, Kathryn Ramsey and partner,  
13 Matthew, and Joseph Tighe and partner, Veronica; her mother,  
14 Florence Florez; her grandchildren, Dominic, Cecilia, Michael  
15 and Nicholas; and her siblings, Steve Florez and partner,  
16 Dolores, Louella Florez Evans and partner, Jesse, Frank Florez  
17 and partner, Gloria, Katrina Florez Fitt and partner, Jeff,  
18 Bill Florez and partner, Abby, Kenneth Florez and partner,  
19 Joanna, Corine Florez, Susan Florez Chavez and partner, Ken,  
20 Robert Florez and partner, Charrise, and Carmen Florez Mansi  
21 and partner, Tom;

22 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
23 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that February 17,  
24 2025 be declared "Viola Florez Tighe Day" in recognition of her  
25 distinguished career and innumerable contributions to higher

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1 education in New Mexico; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
3 transmitted to Kathryn Ramsey and the board of regents of the  
4 university of New Mexico.

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