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HOUSE MEMORIAL 37

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

INTRODUCED BY

Michelle Paulene Abeyta

A MEMORIAL

AFFIRMING THE STATE'S COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING AND PRESERVING MOUNT TAYLOR AS A TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY AND OPPOSING URANIUM MINING PROJECTS THAT THREATEN MOUNT TAYLOR'S CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY.

WHEREAS, Mount Taylor, known to indigenous people by several traditional names, stands as a sacred landmark central to the spiritual, cultural and historical identity of the region's Indian nations, tribes and pueblos; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, following significant advocacy by the Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna and Zuni, the Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation, Mount Taylor was formally nominated and designated as a traditional cultural property on the New Mexico register of cultural properties; and

WHEREAS, the nomination of Mount Taylor as a traditional

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1 cultural property recognized its profound cultural
2 significance, including its role in origin stories, traditional
3 practices and ceremonies and as a place of prayer and
4 pilgrimage for indigenous peoples; and

5 WHEREAS, the supreme court, in a landmark 2014 decision,
6 affirmed the validity of Mount Taylor's traditional cultural
7 property designation, reinforcing the importance of preserving
8 the mountain as a monument for future generations; and

9 WHEREAS, proposed uranium mining projects pose significant
10 threats to Mount Taylor and the surrounding environment by
11 physically degrading the landscape and cultural sites with
12 destructive mining operations; and

13 WHEREAS, proposed uranium mining may deplete and
14 contaminate the San Andres-Glorieta aquifer and related
15 aquifers and springs, which serve as primary water sources for
16 the Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna and the surrounding
17 communities, posing significant risks to water security and
18 public health; and

19 WHEREAS, uranium mining operations create environmental
20 hazards through the transport and storage of uranium ore,
21 increasing the risk of contamination of land, air and water
22 resources and exacerbating the health threats already faced by
23 Indian and non-Indian communities alike; and

24 WHEREAS, the ongoing legacy of uranium mining in New
25 Mexico has resulted in long-term environmental contamination,

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1 such as poisoned aquifers and negative health impacts on Indian
2 nations, tribes and pueblos and local communities, highlighting
3 the need for stronger ecological protections for Mount Taylor
4 and all of the state's natural resources; and

5 WHEREAS, the protection of this sacred mountain is
6 essential for the continuation of traditional practices and
7 ceremonies and the preservation of cultural identity of Indian
8 nations, tribes and pueblos;

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
10 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the house of
11 representatives affirm its commitment to protecting Mount
12 Taylor and oppose any uranium mining projects that threaten its
13 traditional cultural property designation, environmental
14 integrity and sacred status; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives
16 urge federal and state agencies, including the United States
17 forest service and the mining and minerals division of the
18 energy, minerals and natural resources department, to deny
19 permits or authorizations for uranium mining projects within
20 the Mount Taylor traditional cultural property boundaries; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives
22 call upon the United States congress to reform the federal
23 General Mining Act of 1872 to prioritize the protection of
24 sacred cultural sites and to require meaningful tribal
25 consultation in decisions that impact tribal resources; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the United States secretary of the interior, the United States secretary of agriculture, the New Mexico congressional delegation, the governor, the commissioner of public lands, the department of environment and the energy, minerals and natural resources department.