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SENATE MEMORIAL 24

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

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EL SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYO AND THE CHIMAYO PILGRIMAGE FOR THE PEOPLE OF NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, the area of Chimayo, in the Sangre de Cristo mountains north of Santa Fe, was inhabited by the Tewa and Pueblo Indians as early as the twelfth century, A.D., where the site of el santuario de Chimayo was used for healing long before Spanish occupation; and

WHEREAS, the Tewa Indians named the area "Tsi-Mayoh" after one of four sacred hills above the valley; and

WHEREAS, several years after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Spanish returned to reconquer New Mexico, led by Diego de Vargas, and several Spanish families settled along the Santa Cruz river and in the village of El Potrero, the future site of

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1 el santuario de Chimayo; and

2 WHEREAS, in 1813, one of the descendants of the Spanish
3 settlers, Bernardo Abeyta, petitioned local priest Fray
4 Sebastian Alvarez on behalf of the nineteen families of El
5 Potrero to build a chapel dedicated to Our Lord of Esquipulas,
6 on what was believed to be the site where he discovered a
7 crucifix buried under dirt that was emanating light, associated
8 with a miraculous Guatemalan image of Christ crucified known as
9 Our Lord of Esquipulas; and

10 WHEREAS, el santuario de Chimayo was completed in 1816,
11 and pilgrims were known to travel to el santuario throughout
12 the 1800s for its healing properties, especially after the
13 Spanish control of trade routes was eliminated after the
14 Mexican Independence War, after which the area of Chimayo
15 experienced growth in commerce and its famous weaving industry;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, el santuario de Chimayo remained in the ownership
18 of the descendants of Bernardo Abeyta until 1929, when the
19 property was purchased on behalf of the Catholic church from
20 the Chaves family by a group of public-spirited residents of
21 Santa Fe, including writer Mary Austin, artist Frank Applegate
22 and architect John Gaw Meem; and

23 WHEREAS, the Chimayo pilgrimage as it is known today began
24 in the years after World War II, when survivors of the Bataan
25 death march began a walking pilgrimage from Santa Fe to Chimayo

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1 to seek healing of their bodies and memories, and first
2 occurred in the weeks after Easter; and

3 WHEREAS, the Chimayo pilgrimage continued to grow in the
4 twentieth century, being featured in regional and national
5 newspapers, including the *Denver Post* and the *Saturday Evening*
6 *Post*; and

7 WHEREAS, in 1970, el santuario de Chimayo became a
8 registered national historic landmark with the assistance of
9 Reverend Casimiro Roca-Toscas, who served el santuario de
10 Chimayo for fifty-two years, restoring the shrine, greeting
11 pilgrims, hearing confessions and helping to found and build
12 the holy family parish in Chimayo; and

13 WHEREAS, the size and permanence of the pilgrimage led the
14 archdiocese of Santa Fe to list el santuario de Chimayo as an
15 "official pilgrimage site" in 1979; and

16 WHEREAS, the Chimayo pilgrimage attracts more than three
17 hundred thousand pilgrims from all over the southwest and
18 elsewhere each year and includes people from a variety of
19 religious traditions, including Catholic, Protestant, Sikh,
20 Buddhist and new age communities; and

21 WHEREAS, pilgrims visiting el santuario de Chimayo come to
22 pray and visit a chamber called "el pocito", or little well,
23 where they can collect sand in vials or jars as a remembrance
24 of their pilgrimage; it is also believed that the sand can be
25 mixed with water to make mud and be eaten or applied to the

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1 skin in order to heal a person of an ailment; and

2 WHEREAS, thousands of pilgrims walk to el santuario de
3 Chimayo from Santa Fe, Taos and other starting points during
4 holy week; and

5 WHEREAS, the state police, the department of
6 transportation, local law enforcement agencies and emergency
7 responders have recognized the need to keep both drivers and
8 pedestrians safe along roads leading to el santuario de Chimayo
9 by issuing safety alerts and coordinating services to ensure
10 the safety of those participating in the Chimayo pilgrimage;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, news media and television stations from across
13 the state regularly report on the annual Chimayo pilgrimage,
14 its historical significance and the resources available to keep
15 pilgrims safe on their journey; and

16 WHEREAS, the Chimayo pilgrimage will be featured in an
17 iconic two-year exhibit at the New Mexico history museum
18 beginning April 12, 2025, which will feature photographs and a
19 re-creation of the rooms and spaces at el santuario de Chimayo;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, el santuario de Chimayo has become the most
22 significant Catholic pilgrimage site in the country;

23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
24 OF NEW MEXICO that the senate recognize the historical and
25 cultural significance that el santuario de Chimayo and the

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1 Chimayo pilgrimage have had for the people of the state of New
2 Mexico, its culture, its community and its faith; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
4 transmitted to the archdiocese of Santa Fe.