

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TO COLLABORATE WITH THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT AND THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN INTERPRETIVE CENTER OR CENTERS TO SHOWCASE THE HISTORY AND TRADITION INHERENT IN NEW MEXICO AND FACILITATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has a rich and colorful heritage of connecting the United States to trade routes west and south via the Santa Fe trail; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe trail also served to blend diverse cultures, languages and customs as east met west and north met south in the territory of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe trail was first used in 1821, when William Becknell traveled west from Missouri through Las Vegas, New Mexico, to Santa Fe, New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe trail served as a vital commercial and military highway until the introduction of the railroad in 1880; and

WHEREAS, there are many historic landmarks and sites along the original route of the Santa Fe trail that can be accessed by car or on foot but that are not well known to residents or tourists visiting New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, an interpretive center or centers in New Mexico

could serve to introduce residents and tourists to the colorful and dramatic stories of the many men, women and children who traveled along the Santa Fe trail in wagon trains, which left behind ruts in the ground that remain today; and

WHEREAS, the national historic Oregon trail interpretive center offers living history demonstrations, interpretive programs, exhibits, multimedia presentations, special events and interpretive trails and could serve as a model for the development of a similar center or centers in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, an interpretive center could be an agent to promote tourism and enhance local economies along the Santa Fe trail; and

WHEREAS, the Las Vegas citizens' committee for historic preservation was formed in 1977 to encourage the preservation and appreciation of Las Vegas and San Miguel county historic resources and has preserved the exact site where William Becknell first started the Santa Fe trail; and

WHEREAS, small interpretive centers already exist in the city of Las Vegas and the town of Springer and could be expanded, improved and promoted; and

WHEREAS, many local farmers, ranchers and long-time residents who live along the Santa Fe trail have relics, stories and artifacts that they could contribute to an interpretive center, establishing a living connection to the

past; and

WHEREAS, a sustainable interpretive center for showcasing and preserving this significant element of the history of New Mexico and the nation could be an important driver of the economy without negatively affecting the natural resources of the state; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico will celebrate its centennial of statehood, beginning on January 6, 2012, and Governor Richardson in an executive order established a task force to promote statehood activities as well as larger preservation projects with statewide significance and of lasting impact; and

WHEREAS, a Santa Fe trail interpretive center could be considered a preservation project with statewide significance that would have a lasting impact on the state;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the economic development department be requested to collaborate with the tourism department and the cultural affairs department to study the feasibility of establishing an interpretive center or centers to showcase the history and tradition inherent in New Mexico and facilitate economic development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the economic development department consult with the New Mexico centennial of statehood task force in conducting the study; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a report of the findings and recommendations of the study be presented to the appropriate interim legislative committee by November 1, 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the economic development department, the tourism department and the cultural affairs department.