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SENATE MEMORIAL 74

**50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2011**

INTRODUCED BY  
Stuart Ingle

A MEMORIAL

HONORING JONELLE MAISON ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE AND THANKING HER FOR HER MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, Jonelle Maison – bill drafter extraordinaire, author of massive and complicated bills, stalwart defender of the state's constitution and, most important, keeper of the M and Ms – retired from the legislative council service on December 31, 2010; and

WHEREAS, never one to let a technicality stop her from doing what she loves, Jonelle stayed beyond her retirement date to work as a contract drafter for the 2011 session because her time working with what she calls "the first" among the three branches of government has been exceptionally swell; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle started her career at the roundhouse

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1 working as a temporary proofreader, and when permanent work as  
2 a receptionist was offered, she took it even though she hated  
3 answering telephones and, one can only surmise, had a difficult  
4 time hiding that fact from the callers; and

5 WHEREAS, a vacancy in the proofing department rescued her  
6 from the tyranny of ringing telephones, and after quickly  
7 rising to the position of editor and immersing herself in the  
8 language and structure of New Mexico law, she was promoted to  
9 bill drafter; and

10 WHEREAS, Jonelle moved her body, if not her soul, down the  
11 street to work for the administrative office of the courts as a  
12 management analyst, but when she found herself unable to figure  
13 out just what a management analyst was supposed to do, she  
14 "came home" to work as a contractor with the house  
15 appropriations and finance committee and the legislative  
16 finance committee and, later, as a permanent employee of the  
17 council service; and

18 WHEREAS, Jonelle is one of a rare breed – a bill drafter  
19 who is not an attorney and who learned the intricacies of the  
20 law not in a lecture hall but in the roundhouse trenches, over  
21 the course of three decades and more sessions than anyone else  
22 on the fourth floor has survived, with the possible exception  
23 of Saint Stella in the governor's office; and

24 WHEREAS, her lack of a law school imprimatur never got in  
25 her way; she eventually became a senior drafter and trained,

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1 critiqued, mentored, outlasted and out-drafted dozens of staff  
2 attorneys who passed through the council service during her  
3 tenure; and

4 WHEREAS, if learning about New Mexico state government and  
5 law from Jonelle could, at times, be akin to drinking water  
6 from a firehose, she could hardly be faulted for her enthusiasm  
7 for the topic and her encyclopedic memory of not only the  
8 state's contemporary laws but also its more entertaining  
9 historical oddities; and

10 WHEREAS, Jonelle's specialty became the dreaded big bills,  
11 whether they were reorganizing state government, performing  
12 major surgery on the Public School Code or merging the public  
13 utility commission with the corporation commission, and though  
14 it was clear she loved the challenge and would have it no other  
15 way, she could sometimes be heard moaning, "Oh, Lord, just  
16 shoot me now"; and

17 WHEREAS, Jonelle was always willing to go to the mat over  
18 constitutional issues, and many legislators, green and not-so-  
19 green, were treated to her exclamation, "But your bill violates  
20 the constitution!" and to her signature body language that so  
21 clearly said, "Anyone who even THINKS about violating the  
22 antidonation clause can meet me outside ... "; and

23 WHEREAS, lioness though she may have been over some  
24 matters, Jonelle was actually the office softie – when it came  
25 to baby showers, retirement parties and all-around festive

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1 events, she was the first to sign up to deck the halls, and  
2 many visitors under the age of five gravitated to her office to  
3 boogie with her dancing flower pot or sprawl on the floor with  
4 toys; and

5 WHEREAS, though she has spent decades immersed in the dry  
6 verbiage of legislative drafting, Jonelle's native tongue is  
7 the colorful turn of phrase – she often told proofreaders  
8 "please don't maunder over my bill", and she would describe the  
9 pedigree of certain laws by saying that they had been on the  
10 books "since God was a goose" – and while some of her most  
11 colorful turns of phrase cannot be read out loud in the senate  
12 chamber, she will always be fondly remembered in the back halls  
13 of the council service for her frequent emphatic references to  
14 ducks; and

15 WHEREAS, the back halls and front halls alike will be  
16 lesser places without Jonelle's laughter, gusto and flair, as  
17 well as her fierce dedication to the legislature and to the  
18 career that she claims she just "fell into";

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
20 OF NEW MEXICO that deep appreciation be extended to Jonelle  
21 Maison for her many years of service to the legislature as a  
22 drafter, teacher, committee staffer, analyst, liaison, mentor,  
23 proofreader, editor, capital outlay "honcha", challenged  
24 receptionist and, most of all, loyal friend of the institution,  
25 even when faced with tempting work offers elsewhere, such as on

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1 Jerry King's ranch; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be  
3 given to Jonelle before she leaves town to go off gallivanting  
4 on her next trip abroad, with warmest wishes for a retirement  
5 that is nothing short of coolarama.

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