

A MEMORIAL

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY 20, 2015 "URANIUM WORKERS DAY" IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEREAS, the Grants mineral belt, situated between Shiprock and the Pueblo of Laguna, contains one of the world's richest uranium deposits; and

WHEREAS, during a thirty-year period beginning in 1948, the Grants mineral belt produced more uranium than any other district in the world and accounted for one-third of all of the uranium produced in the United States during that period; and

WHEREAS, the history of uranium mining has involved small "mom and pop" surface and underground mines and large-scale commercial surface and underground mines; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation has identified over five hundred abandoned uranium mines on tribal lands; and

WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department has identified nearly six hundred mine and exploration sites in McKinley, Cibola and Sandoval counties alone; and

WHEREAS, a recent inventory study identified two hundred fifty-nine uranium mine sites in New Mexico and of these, one hundred thirty-seven have no record of any reclamation; and

WHEREAS, in addition to uranium mines, mills used to

process ore to yellowcake were constructed and operated at seven sites in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the United States department of energy reports that nearly twelve thousand persons were employed in the uranium mining and milling industry in the United States in 1980; and

WHEREAS, the energy, minerals and natural resources department estimates that about seven thousand people were employed in the uranium industry in New Mexico in 1978, the record year for uranium production in the state; and

WHEREAS, limited studies on the health risks to miners from uranium exposure showed that Navajo uranium miners were three times more likely to die from lung cancer than the United States average; and

WHEREAS, uranium miners were five times more likely to develop lung cancer than the general population; and

WHEREAS, exposure to dust, gases, exhaust and fumes as well as the lack of protective clothing and safety measures, such as miners coming in contact with water from the mine ceilings or eating their lunches while at work, can result in non-malignant and malignant respiratory diseases; and

WHEREAS, an increased risk for kidney disease, hypertension and autoimmune diseases may have occurred from mining-era exposures and environmental legacy exposures; and

WHEREAS, the negative effects of uranium mining and

milling and the health impacts from working in a mine are stressors for individuals and families; and

WHEREAS, many former workers and their families continue to live in communities that have not been adequately cleaned up or reclaimed and, as a result, may experience continued exposure to harmful contamination in the air and environment;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition of the contributions of uranium workers and in recognition of the ongoing health and environmental impacts as a result of historical uranium industrial operations in New Mexico, February 20, 2015 be designated "Uranium Workers Day" in the house of representatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, the governor of the Pueblo of Laguna, the governor of the Pueblo of Acoma, the president of the Navajo Nation and the county commissioners of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley counties.