

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REMEMBERING "THE LONG WALK" OF THE NAVAJO TO BOSQUE REDONDO.

3
4 WHEREAS, at the beginning of 1863, the Navajo, a
5 diverse and profoundly spiritual people, had lived for
6 centuries on land in what is now the four corners region of
7 Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico; and

8 WHEREAS, Navajos lived as shepherds, growers, hunters,
9 wild plant gatherers and defenders of their homeland and
10 were people who were independent and economically self-
11 sufficient; and

12 WHEREAS, in the 1850s, hostilities between the Navajo,
13 Hopi and Spanish colonists began to escalate and, soon
14 after, hostilities escalated between the Americans and
15 Navajos; and

16 WHEREAS, during this time, a cycle of treaties, raids
17 and counter-raids by the United States army, the Navajo and
18 a civilian militia ensued, with hostilities among the
19 parties escalating; and

20 WHEREAS, Major General James H. Carleton became
21 commander of the United States department of New Mexico in
22 September 1862, with an agenda of expelling the Navajo from
23 their homeland and opening their lands to gold and silver
24 prospectors; and

25 WHEREAS, General Carleton enlisted the help of

1 Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson, who would be responsible
2 for organizing the relocation of Navajos from their tribal
3 lands to a military outpost; and

4 WHEREAS, for several years, Chief Manuelito, one of the
5 principal war chiefs of the Navajo, led a group of warriors
6 in resisting federal efforts to forcibly remove the Navajos
7 to Bosque Redondo; and

8 WHEREAS, "the long walk" of the Navajo started in the
9 spring of 1864 at Fort Defiance, Arizona, a camp located in
10 northeast Arizona at the mouth of Canyon Bonito and ended
11 over three hundred miles away at Bosque Redondo; and

12 WHEREAS, Jesus Arviso, a Mexican captive raised Navajo,
13 served as a Navajo interpreter during "the long walk" period
14 and was highly regarded by all parties; and

15 WHEREAS, the United States government deported over
16 eight thousand Navajo from their homeland and forced them to
17 walk up to thirteen miles a day for eighteen days at
18 gunpoint to Bosque Redondo; and

19 WHEREAS, some fifty-three different forced marches
20 occurred between August 1864 and the end of 1866; and

21 WHEREAS, the march was very difficult and pushed many
22 Navajos to their breaking point, including death; and

23 WHEREAS, several hundred of the Navajo captives died
24 from starvation, freezing and illness during "the long walk"
25 and some were abducted by slave traders along the way; and

1 WHEREAS, upon reaching Bosque Redondo, the United
2 States army put the Navajos to work building the fort,
3 planting trees, plowing and building a diversion dam, with
4 the intent of teaching the Navajos how to farm and be able
5 to feed themselves; and

6 WHEREAS, the army's plans were thwarted as insect
7 infestations, flooding and other natural disasters destroyed
8 the crops; and

9 WHEREAS, a major portion of the crops were destroyed
10 during the summers of 1865, 1866 and 1867, and the Navajos
11 refused to plant in the spring of 1868, feeling that the
12 land had rejected them; and

13 WHEREAS, the crop failures required the United States
14 army to feed and care for the Navajo and to admit that their
15 plan had failed; and

16 WHEREAS, the United States military swiftly found
17 itself overwhelmed by the needs of Navajo captives and
18 became unable to adequately feed, clothe and transport the
19 captives; and

20 WHEREAS, by 1866, public opinion in New Mexico was
21 turning against the military's experiment to subjugate the
22 Navajos and the New Mexico territorial government petitioned
23 the president to end the subjugation of the Navajos at
24 Bosque Redondo; and

25 WHEREAS, finally, in May 1868, a treaty was signed at

1 Fort Sumner, allowing the Navajos to return to their
2 homeland in the four corners region and acknowledging Navajo
3 sovereignty; and

4 WHEREAS, Navajo interpreter Jesus Arviso played an
5 active role during negotiations of the 1868 treaty and
6 continued to play a liaison role between the Navajos and
7 their successive agents afterward; and

8 WHEREAS, Chief Manuelito was among the leaders who
9 signed the 1868 treaty, ending the period of imprisonment in
10 United States government internment camps; and

11 WHEREAS, the impoverished condition of the Navajos
12 moved the United States peace commissioners to allot one
13 hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), fifteen thousand
14 sheep and goats and five hundred head of cattle, as well as
15 token payments to each tribal member, for rehabilitation;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, this was a small, but symbolic acknowledgment
18 by the government that the Navajos had been severely
19 mistreated through the forced march and incarceration at
20 Fort Sumner; and

21 WHEREAS, at sunrise on June 18, 1868, the Navajos, in a
22 ten-mile-long column, left the Bosque Redondo and returned
23 to their homeland; and

24 WHEREAS, on June 4, 2005, the Bosque Redondo memorial
25 on the banks of the Pecos river near Fort Sumner was opened;

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and

WHEREAS, the memorial is a symbol of the Navajos' resilience and success upon their return to Navajo lands and stands as a "site of conscience";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Navajos who were forced from their sacred lands on "the long walk" be remembered and commemorated for their sacrifice and bravery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that one of America's most shameful chapters in history be remembered and continue to serve as a cautionary tale; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the president of the United States, the governor, members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, the president of the Navajo Nation and the manager of the Bosque Redondo memorial. _____