

HOUSE MEMORIAL 118

52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2015

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT TO FORM A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE TRAUMA EXPERIENCED BY CORRECTIONS PERSONNEL AND OTHERS DURING THE 1980 RIOT AT THE PENITENTIARY OF NEW MEXICO, TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION, TO PROPOSE POLICIES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THAT COMPENSATION AND TO STUDY PRESENT-DAY OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS UNIQUE TO EMPLOYMENT IN CORRECTIONS FACILITIES.

WHEREAS, on February 2 and 3, 1980, the inmates at the penitentiary of New Mexico rioted, took over most of the facility and held fourteen corrections personnel as hostages; and

WHEREAS, the two days that the inmates were in control of the penitentiary of New Mexico were characterized by extreme brutality; thirty-three inmates were killed, over two hundred

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1 inmates were injured and seven corrections personnel were
2 physically tortured or injured; and

3 WHEREAS, the corrections personnel who were present during
4 the 1980 prison riot may be suffering from or may have suffered
5 from posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of their
6 experiences during the riot; and

7 WHEREAS, in addition to corrections personnel, members of
8 the national guard of New Mexico, the New Mexico state police
9 division of the department of public safety and other law
10 enforcement officers and emergency personnel who were first
11 responders at the scene of the prison riot may be suffering
12 from or may have suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder as
13 a result of their role in responding to the crisis; and

14 WHEREAS, those who have survived that trauma and live with
15 posttraumatic stress disorder may need access to a range of
16 behavioral health care services; and

17 WHEREAS, those who have been impacted by traumatic
18 experiences suffered during the 1980 prison riot or their
19 families may be eligible for compensation; and

20 WHEREAS, the legislature recognizes the circumstances that
21 led to these events and the failure to compensate for the
22 negative impacts the riot had on those individuals involved in
23 responding to this crisis; and

24 WHEREAS, the legislature recognizes that the corrections
25 department is committed to learning from mistakes of the past

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1 and is working to create a departmental culture based in
2 respect and dignity for all those assigned to the department's
3 care and influence; and

4 WHEREAS, unique stress factors are inherent in the jobs of
5 corrections personnel within correctional facilities,
6 particularly for personnel tasked with daily contact with
7 inmates; and

8 WHEREAS, finding ways to minimize the impact of those
9 stress factors is critical to creating a safe environment for
10 inmates and corrections personnel;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
12 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the corrections
13 department be requested to convene a task force to:

14 A. identify the potential class of persons who were
15 present during the riot or participated in crisis response
16 efforts during the aftermath of the riot that occurred from
17 February 2 to February 4, 1980 and who should receive
18 compensation;

19 B. establish policies and procedures for
20 administering the compensation;

21 C. study occupational stressors relating to work in
22 New Mexico's correctional facilities; and

23 D. propose policies and programs that could be
24 implemented to mitigate those occupational stressors; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include at

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1 least three professionals with knowledge of best practices
2 relating to employee wellness in a correctional setting, such
3 as critical incident stress debriefing; at least one
4 representative each from the corrections department, the
5 national guard of New Mexico, the New Mexico state police
6 division of the department of public safety and the attorney
7 general's office; and any other persons appointed by the
8 corrections department; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force present a
10 report containing its findings and recommendations to the New
11 Mexico legislative council and to the legislative finance
12 committee prior to November 30, 2015; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
14 transmitted to the governor, the secretary of corrections, the
15 adjutant general of the national guard of New Mexico, the
16 attorney general and the chief of the New Mexico state police.