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SENATE MEMORIAL 27

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

INTRODUCED BY

Carlos R. Cisneros

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE TRAGEDY OF THE 1980 PRISON RIOT AT THE  
PENITENTIARY OF NEW MEXICO, ACKNOWLEDGING BOTH THE INMATES  
WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST AND THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS WHO WERE  
HELD HOSTAGE AND EXPRESSING THE SENATE'S COMMITMENT TO GREATER  
PUBLIC SAFETY.

WHEREAS, from February 2 to February 4, 1980, the  
penitentiary of New Mexico was the site of what remains one of  
the most savage and deadly prison riots in this nation's  
history; and

WHEREAS, a combination of overcrowding, lack of programs,  
poor living conditions and unsatisfactory food led to the riot  
and the ensuing thirty-six-hour siege of the prison; and

WHEREAS, during those horrific hours, thirty-three inmates  
were killed and at least ninety were seriously injured by

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1 fellow inmates, and fourteen corrections officers were held  
2 hostage, assaulted or injured by rioting inmates; and

3 WHEREAS, since the 1980 New Mexico prison riot, the  
4 corrections department, now under the leadership of Secretary  
5 of Corrections Gregg Marcantel, has worked to ensure that the  
6 combination of conditions that led to the riot is never created  
7 again and that inmates are provided with the proper balance of  
8 social control and support and given the best opportunity  
9 possible to successfully integrate into society, not re-offend  
10 and become contributing taxpayers rather than tax liabilities;  
11 and

12 WHEREAS, the legislature recognizes that a properly  
13 functioning corrections system is one that safely and humanely  
14 incarcerates those persons who must be separated from society  
15 and educates, trains and supports the overwhelming number of  
16 inmates who will return to society; and

17 WHEREAS, in recognition that corrections officers are  
18 among the bravest, most dedicated public servants and face some  
19 of the most difficult working conditions, the names of the  
20 corrections officers who were taken hostage during the 1980  
21 prison riot while in service to the people of New Mexico are  
22 hereby recognized: Captain Greg Roybal, Lieutenant Jose Anaya,  
23 Medical Technician Ross Maez and Corrections Officers Victor  
24 Gallegos, Elton Curry, Juan Bustos, Michael Hernandez, Ronnie  
25 Martinez, Michael Schmitt, Valentin Martinez, Antonio Vigil,

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1 Larry Mendoza, Edward Ortega and Ramon Gutierrez; and

2 WHEREAS, the corrections department's commitment to  
3 ensuring that the conditions that led to the riot never exist  
4 again is an integral part of the corrections department's  
5 philosophy, particularly under the leadership of Secretary  
6 Marcantel, and has manifested itself in everything from the  
7 continuing revitalization of the prison building, "Old Main",  
8 to support for meaningful inmate programming; and

9 WHEREAS, the corrections department recognizes the thirty-  
10 fifth anniversary of the prison riot and commits to respecting  
11 the past to create a better future by using this tragedy to  
12 educate, inform and involve the public in the importance of  
13 prison accountability, programming and public safety;

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
15 OF NEW MEXICO that the tragedy of the 1980 prison riot at the  
16 penitentiary of New Mexico and the men who were killed, injured  
17 and taken hostage during the riot not be forgotten; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the corrections department's  
19 commitment to increasing public safety through lower recidivism  
20 rates and improved rehabilitation of inmates be commended; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the senate express its support  
22 for increased public safety; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that continued awareness of the  
24 1980 prison riot and the events leading up to it serve to  
25 strengthen the commitment of government leaders to advocate for

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1 the fundamental rights and dignity of all, including crime  
2 victims, correctional professionals and each inmate assigned to  
3 the responsibility of the state; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
5 transmitted to the governor and the corrections department.