

1 SENATE MEMORIAL 128

2 **52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2015**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A MEMORIAL

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

12
13 WHEREAS, at the beginning of 1863, the Navajo, a diverse
14 and profoundly spiritual people, had lived for centuries on
15 land in what is now the four corners region of Utah, Colorado,
16 Arizona and New Mexico; and

17 WHEREAS, Navajos lived as shepherds, growers, hunters,
18 wild plant gatherers and defenders of their homeland and were
19 people who were independent and economically self-sufficient;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, in the 1850s, hostilities between the Navajo,
22 Hopi and Spanish colonists began to escalate and, soon after,
23 hostilities escalated between the Americans and Navajos; and

24 WHEREAS, during this time, a cycle of treaties, raids and
25 counter-raids by the United States army, the Navajo and a

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1 civilian militia ensued, with hostilities among the parties
2 escalating; and

3 WHEREAS, Major General James H. Carleton became commander
4 of the United States department of New Mexico in September
5 1862, with an agenda of expelling the Navajo from their
6 homeland and opening their lands to gold and silver
7 prospectors; and

8 WHEREAS, General Carleton enlisted the help of Colonel
9 Christopher "Kit" Carson, who would be responsible for
10 organizing the relocation of Navajos from their tribal lands to
11 a military outpost; and

12 WHEREAS, for several years, Chief Manuelito, one of the
13 principal war chiefs of the Navajo, led a group of warriors in
14 resisting federal efforts to forcibly remove the Navajos to
15 Bosque Redondo; and

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

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

23 WHEREAS, the United States government deported over eight
24 thousand Navajo from their homeland and forced them to walk up
25 to thirteen miles a day for eighteen days at gunpoint to Bosque

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1 Redondo; and

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

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

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

9 WHEREAS, upon reaching Bosque Redondo, the United States
10 army put the Navajos to work building the fort, planting trees,
11 plowing and building a diversion dam, with the intent of
12 teaching the Navajos how to farm and be able to feed
13 themselves; and

14 WHEREAS, the army's plans were thwarted as insect
15 infestations, flooding and other natural disasters destroyed
16 the crops; and

17 WHEREAS, a major portion of the crops were destroyed
18 during the summers of 1865, 1866 and 1867, and the Navajos
19 refused to plant in the spring of 1868, feeling that the land
20 had rejected them; and

21 WHEREAS, the crop failures required the United States army
22 to feed and care for the Navajo and to admit that their plan
23 had failed; and

24 WHEREAS, the United States military swiftly found itself
25 overwhelmed by the needs of Navajo captives and became unable

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1 to adequately feed, clothe and transport the captives; and

2 WHEREAS, by 1866, public opinion in New Mexico was turning
3 against the military's experiment to subjugate the Navajos and
4 the New Mexico territorial government petitioned the president
5 to end the subjugation of the Navajos at Bosque Redondo; and

6 WHEREAS, finally, in May 1868, a treaty was signed at Fort
7 Sumner, allowing the Navajos to return to their homeland in the
8 four corners region and acknowledging Navajo sovereignty; and

9 WHEREAS, Navajo interpreter Jesus Arviso played an active
10 role during negotiations of the 1868 treaty and continued to
11 play a liaison role between the Navajos and their successive
12 agents afterward; and

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

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

21 WHEREAS, this was a small, but symbolic acknowledgment by
22 the government that the Navajos had been severely mistreated
23 through the forced march and incarceration at Fort Sumner; and

24 WHEREAS, at sunrise on June 18, 1868, the Navajos, in a
25 ten-mile-long column, left the Bosque Redondo and returned to

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1 their homeland; and

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

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

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

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

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