

HOUSE MEMORIAL 117

**53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2017**

INTRODUCED BY

D. Wonda Johnson and Eliseo Lee Alcon

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE BUREAU OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO TO STUDY THE POSSIBLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A URANIUM MINE CLEANUP PROGRAM AND TO ASSESS THE CAPACITY OF NEW MEXICO'S LABOR FORCE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CLEANUP OF LEGACY URANIUM MINES.

WHEREAS, the United States environmental protection agency estimates that there are ten thousand four hundred abandoned uranium mine features in fifteen western states; and

WHEREAS, on the Navajo Nation, there are more than one thousand one hundred mines, including five hundred twenty-three documented abandoned uranium mines, and five abandoned uranium waste sites; and

WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department has identified two

.207324.1

underscored material = new  
[bracketed material] = delete

underscoring material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1 hundred fifty-nine abandoned uranium mines on New Mexico lands  
2 and more than one-half of those sites have no record of  
3 cleanup; and

4 WHEREAS, a legacy of uranium contamination remains, along  
5 with its potential health effects that include lung cancer from  
6 inhalation of radioactive particles, bone cancer and impaired  
7 kidney function from exposure to radionuclides in drinking  
8 water; and

9 WHEREAS, in 2015, the United States environmental  
10 protection agency recovered almost one billion dollars  
11 (\$1,000,000,000) from a litigation settlement to address over  
12 fifty mines, for which the Kerr-McGee corporation and its  
13 successor, Tronox, have responsibility; and

14 WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation received more than forty  
15 million dollars (\$40,000,000) from the settlement; and

16 WHEREAS, the United States and the Navajo Nation have  
17 entered into a settlement agreement with two affiliated  
18 subsidiaries of Freeport-McMoran, incorporated, for the cleanup  
19 of ninety-four abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, under the settlement, valued at over six hundred  
22 million dollars (\$600,000,000), Cyprus Amax Minerals company  
23 and Western Nuclear, incorporated, will perform the work and  
24 the United States government will contribute approximately one-  
25 half of the costs; and

.207324.1

underscored material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1           WHEREAS, the settlement terms were outlined in a proposed  
2 settlement decree filed in federal court in Phoenix, Arizona;  
3 and

4           WHEREAS, with this settlement, the funds are now committed  
5 to begin the cleanup process of over two hundred abandoned  
6 uranium mines on the Navajo Nation; and

7           WHEREAS, the Jackpile-Paguete mine located on the Pueblo  
8 of Laguna, once the largest open-pit uranium mine in the world,  
9 is undergoing evaluation to determine the amount of cleanup  
10 needed; and

11           WHEREAS, the uranium mine cleanup program is not only  
12 beneficial to public health, but presents an opportunity for  
13 potential economic growth and job creation for New Mexico with  
14 significant economic impacts; and

15           WHEREAS, in anticipation of the cleanup program, New  
16 Mexico workers must be prepared to perform jobs at the cleanup  
17 sites; and

18           WHEREAS, it would be beneficial to identify the kinds of  
19 jobs that need to be created to perform the cleanup and the  
20 training New Mexicans would need to perform the jobs; for state  
21 institutions of higher learning to be prepared to teach the  
22 specific subjects that address those jobs; and for  
23 collaboration between state schools and colleges to develop  
24 specific programs to train students to fill the new jobs while  
25 avoiding duplicative training efforts; and

.207324.1

underscoring material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1           WHEREAS, it would be beneficial to explore possibilities  
2 for federal funding and related job opportunities for tribal  
3 members and New Mexicans;

4           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
5 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the bureau of  
6 business and economic research at the university of New Mexico  
7 be requested to conduct an analysis of the possible economic  
8 effects on the state and local communities associated with  
9 uranium mine cleanup and conduct an assessment of the capacity  
10 of the existing New Mexico labor force to contribute to the  
11 cleanup of legacy uranium mines; and

12           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the bureau of business and  
13 economic research be requested to report its findings and  
14 recommendations to the appropriate interim legislative  
15 committee by October 1, 2017; and

16           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
17 transmitted to the director of the bureau of business and  
18 economic research at the university of New Mexico, the New  
19 Mexico congressional delegation, the secretary of energy,  
20 minerals and natural resources and the president of the Navajo  
21 Nation.