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SENATE MEMORIAL 23

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

Pete Campos

A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMUNITY LEADER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE JUAN JOSÉ PEÑA.

WHEREAS, Juan José Peña, a recognized community leader and civil rights advocate from Las Vegas, New Mexico, died on June 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was born in Hagerman, New Mexico on December 13, 1945, and his family moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico when Mr. Peña was a child; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña graduated from Robertson high school in 1964, where he played football, wrestled and competed in track and field events; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña received bachelor of arts and masters degrees from New Mexico highlands university, where he studied Spanish, literature and political science; and

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1 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña played football for New Mexico highlands
2 university and played semiprofessional ice hockey for what was
3 then the Highlands hawks; and

4 WHEREAS, after graduating from college, Mr. Peña was
5 drafted and served in the United States army during the Vietnam
6 conflict from 1969 to 1970; and

7 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña received numerous decorations, including
8 the bronze star medal for valor, and Mr. Peña was the most
9 dedicated member of the fourth infantry division when it
10 returned to the United States; and

11 WHEREAS, from 1972 to 1978, Mr. Peña served as a Spanish
12 professor, coordinator of ethnic studies and director and
13 professor of Chicano studies and professor of bilingual
14 education at New Mexico highlands university; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was a linguistics expert who spoke
16 multiple languages, including English, Spanish, German,
17 Portuguese, French and Vietnamese; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña worked as a supervisory interpreter for
19 the United States district court for the district of New
20 Mexico, retired after two decades of interpreting in 2005 and
21 continued to work as a freelance interpreter after his
22 retirement; and

23 WHEREAS, in 1995, while working as an interpreter, Mr.
24 Peña met his partner of twenty-three years, Ann Tran, when he
25 drove her to court to interpret for a Vietnamese defendant; and

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1 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña and Ann Tran were always by each other's
2 side to offer love and support; and

3 WHEREAS, from his college days on, Mr. Peña was a
4 humanitarian, an activist and a warrior who represented the
5 people; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña fought for the disadvantaged and
7 disenfranchised and spoke for many who did not have a voice;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, during his tenure at New Mexico highlands
10 university, Mr. Peña served as an organizer and leader for el
11 partido de la raza unida de Nuevo Mexico; and

12 WHEREAS, in 1976, Mr. Peña rose to become the national
13 president of el partido de la raza unida national congreso de
14 aztlan and met with world leaders such as Mexico's president,
15 Vicente Fox, and Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine
16 liberation organization; and

17 WHEREAS, in his leadership roles, Mr. Peña often met with
18 the "big four of the movimiento" - Cesar Chavez, Reies Lopez
19 Tijerina, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and José Ángel Gutiérrez;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña also served as commander of local
22 branches of the American GI forum, was active in the disabled
23 American veterans and veterans of foreign wars organizations
24 and was a founding member, chair and vice-chair of the Hispano
25 round table; and

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