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SENATE MEMORIAL 18

56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2023

INTRODUCED BY

Cliff R. Pirtle

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACKDOM
HOMESTEADER COLONY IN CHAVES COUNTY AND REQUESTING THE CULTURAL
AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOW TO GAIN
ACCESS TO THE HISTORICAL TOWNSITE.

WHEREAS, Blackdom was the most influential Black
homesteader colony in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Blackdom, located about twenty miles south of
Roswell in Chaves county, was founded by Black settlers in
1901; and

WHEREAS, Francis Marion Boyer, known as Frank Boyer, was
raised hearing stories about New Mexico from his father, Henry
Boyer, a freedman from Georgia, who served as a wagoner with
the army units of Stephen W. Kearny during the Mexican-American
War; and

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1 WHEREAS, Frank was educated at Morehouse college and Fisk
2 university, where he learned about the legal requirements of
3 homesteading; and

4 WHEREAS, Frank encouraged African Americans to report and
5 challenge abuses in the Jim Crow era, leading to his life being
6 threatened by the ku klux klan; and

7 WHEREAS, encouraged to move west for his safety, Frank
8 traveled to New Mexico on foot with two students, picking up
9 day labor along the way; and

10 WHEREAS, Frank's wife, Ella, and their four children
11 followed in 1901; and

12 WHEREAS, Blackdom was founded by Frank and Ella Boyer
13 under the requirements of the federal Homestead Act and was
14 incorporated in 1903 by thirteen African Americans; and

15 WHEREAS, the town experienced significant growth in its
16 first decades, with settlers from throughout the United States
17 moving to the community; and

18 WHEREAS, many residents lived on farms, but Blackdom also
19 developed a small village with its own United States post
20 office, a store, a pumping plant and an office building; and

21 WHEREAS, several other businesses flourished, including a
22 blacksmith shop, a hotel, a weekly newspaper and a Baptist
23 church; and

24 WHEREAS, the residents of Blackdom established a community
25 school to ensure that Blackdom's children would be educated;

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1 and

2 WHEREAS, Lloyd Allen was a respected teacher who
3 emphasized the importance of education to his Blackdom
4 students; and

5 WHEREAS, prominent families of Blackdom included the
6 Boyers, Herrons, Proffits, Collinses, Eubankses, Wilsons and
7 Smiths, with many families intertwined through kinship and
8 marriage relationships; and

9 WHEREAS, the exact population of the community is unknown,
10 but the United States national park service estimates that
11 approximately one hundred fifty people resided in the
12 community, of which twelve women homesteaded, several on their
13 own; and

14 WHEREAS, Blackdom's prosperity depended on adequate
15 precipitation, but a drought and the depletion of natural wells
16 of the Roswell artesian basin aquifer starting in 1916 caused
17 many of the settlers to relocate; and

18 WHEREAS, Blackdom became uninhabited in 1921; and

19 WHEREAS, no structures remain in Blackdom, except for a
20 barely visible concrete foundation of the schoolhouse; and

21 WHEREAS, today, Blackdom is considered a ghost town; and

22 WHEREAS, in honoring Blackdom's history, October 26, 2002,
23 was proclaimed Blackdom Day by the governor of New Mexico, and
24 a historical marker was erected at a rest stop on United States
25 highway 285 between Roswell and Artesia; and

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1 WHEREAS, former Blackdom residents and descendants of
2 settlers were present for the dedication ceremony; and

3 WHEREAS, although the site has historical significance,
4 Blackdom is difficult to reach, as it is located in a remote
5 and isolated section of southern Chaves county; and

6 WHEREAS, surveys by the historic preservation division of
7 the cultural affairs department and aerial maps show the only
8 paved roads in the area are United States highway 285 and New
9 Mexico state road 599; and

10 WHEREAS, Chaves county road 130 is an unpaved, north-south
11 route, and an unnamed arroyo is located north and west of the
12 Blackdom site; and

13 WHEREAS, the assessment of the historic preservation
14 division is that the Blackdom site can currently be reached by
15 United States highway 285, Chaves county road 130 and by a
16 combination of unpaved, dirt two-track roads to the north or to
17 the east, presenting challenging terrain; and

18 WHEREAS, additionally, some of the dirt roads may be
19 located on private property, requiring permission to access;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Blackdom is culturally significant, and access to
22 the site before further deterioration occurs is important; and

23 WHEREAS, a task force would be helpful in determining how
24 to access the Blackdom townsite;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE

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1 OF NEW MEXICO that the cultural significance of the Blackdom
2 homesteader colony in Chaves county be recognized and that the
3 cultural affairs department be requested to convene a task
4 force to study how to gain access to the historical townsite;
5 and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be composed of
7 representatives of the office of the state historian, the state
8 land office, Chaves county, the New Mexico association of
9 counties, New Mexico's congressional delegation, the United
10 States postmaster general, the office on African American
11 affairs and Blackdom property owners; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force present its
13 findings and conclusions to the interim committee dealing with
14 economic and rural development issues and other appropriate
15 interim legislative committees by November 1, 2023; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
17 transmitted to the secretary of cultural affairs, the state
18 historian, the commissioner of public lands, Chaves county
19 commissioners, the executive director of New Mexico association
20 of counties, members of New Mexico's congressional delegation,
21 the United States postmaster general, the office on African
22 American affairs and Blackdom property owners.