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HOUSE MEMORIAL 85

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

INTRODUCED BY

D. Wonda Johnson

A MEMORIAL

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY 20, 2015 "URANIUM WORKERS DAY" IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEREAS, the Grants mineral belt, situated between Shiprock and the Pueblo of Laguna, contains one of the world's richest uranium deposits; and

WHEREAS, during a thirty-year period beginning in 1948, the Grants mineral belt produced more uranium than any other district in the world and accounted for one-third of all of the uranium produced in the United States during that period; and

WHEREAS, the history of uranium mining has involved small "mom and pop" surface and underground mines and large-scale commercial surface and underground mines; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation has identified over five hundred abandoned uranium mines on tribal lands; and

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1           WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy,  
2 minerals and natural resources department has identified nearly  
3 six hundred mine and exploration sites in McKinley, Cibola and  
4 Sandoval counties alone; and

5           WHEREAS, a recent inventory study identified two hundred  
6 fifty-nine uranium mine sites in New Mexico and of these, one  
7 hundred thirty-seven have no record of any reclamation; and

8           WHEREAS, in addition to uranium mines, mills used to  
9 process ore to yellowcake were constructed and operated at  
10 seven sites in New Mexico; and

11           WHEREAS, the United States department of energy reports  
12 that nearly twelve thousand persons were employed in the  
13 uranium mining and milling industry in the United States in  
14 1980; and

15           WHEREAS, the energy, minerals and natural resources  
16 department estimates that about seven thousand people were  
17 employed in the uranium industry in New Mexico in 1978, the  
18 record year for uranium production in the state; and

19           WHEREAS, limited studies on the health risks to miners  
20 from uranium exposure showed that Navajo uranium miners were  
21 three times more likely to die from lung cancer than the United  
22 States average; and

23           WHEREAS, uranium miners were five times more likely to  
24 develop lung cancer than the general population; and

25           WHEREAS, exposure to dust, gases, exhaust and fumes as

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1 well as the lack of protective clothing and safety measures,  
2 such as miners coming in contact with water from the mine  
3 ceilings or eating their lunches while at work, can result in  
4 non-malignant and malignant respiratory diseases; and

5 WHEREAS, an increased risk for kidney disease,  
6 hypertension and autoimmune diseases may have occurred from  
7 mining-era exposures and environmental legacy exposures; and

8 WHEREAS, the negative effects of uranium mining and  
9 milling and the health impacts from working in a mine are  
10 stressors for individuals and families; and

11 WHEREAS, many former workers and their families continue  
12 to live in communities that have not been adequately cleaned up  
13 or reclaimed and, as a result, may experience continued  
14 exposure to harmful contamination in the air and environment;

15 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
16 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition  
17 of the contributions of uranium workers and in recognition of  
18 the ongoing health and environmental impacts as a result of  
19 historical uranium industrial operations in New Mexico,  
20 February 20, 2015 be designated "Uranium Workers Day" in the  
21 house of representatives; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
23 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional  
24 delegation, the governor of the Pueblo of Laguna, the governor  
25 of the Pueblo of Acoma, the president of the Navajo Nation and

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1 the county commissioners of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley  
2 counties.

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