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Environmental & Community Leaders Praise Legislators For Proposing Constitutional Environmental Rights Be Added to New Mexico's Bill of Rights

Santa Fe, NM: New Mexico leaders are applauding the proposal by New Mexico legislators to amend the New Mexico Constitution in order to add enforceable environmental rights. The Joint Resolution proposing the amendment was pre-filed by the sponsors on Wednesday, January 5, for the 2022 legislative session. The proposed New Mexico Green Amendment, as it is being called, is receiving strong upfront support with 24 legislators already signing on in support including: by Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez, Representative Joanne Ferrary, Senator Harold Pope, Jr., Senator Bill Soules, Senator Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics, Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino, Senator Carrie Hamblen, Representative Tara Lujan, Senator Shannon Pinto, Representative Andrea Romero, Representative Karen Bash, Representative Debbie Sarinana, Representative Roger Montoya, Senator Linda Lopez, Representative Patricia Roybal Caballero, Senator Bill Tallman, Senator Jeff Steinborn, Representative Kay Bounkeua, Representative Christine Trujillo, Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, Representative Gail Chasey, Representative Miguel Garcia, Representative Kristina Ortez, and Senator Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales

The Joint Resolution proposes amending the state constitution's Bill of Rights to recognize and protect the rights of all of the people of New Mexico "to a clean and healthy environment, including water, air, soil, flora, fauna, ecosystems and climate, and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic and healthful qualities of the environment"; to ensure these rights are protected for present and future generations; and to designate all the state's

government officials as trustees of the natural resources of the state constitutionally obligated to “conserve, protect, and maintain” them.

“The Green Amendment is a “No-Brainer”. As the World experiences Climate Change, realizes the desecration and pollution of Mother Earth and our natural environment, the need for an enforceable set of governing principles and environmental rights created by the will of the People is a must and will only help our state and its agencies achieve the government’s responsibility of protecting and caring for its constituents. A New Mexico Green Amendment clearly recognizes that all the people of the State have an individual, inalienable, and infeasible right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure Sacred water, clean air, healthy ecosystems, a stable climate, and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic, healthful, and magnificent qualities of our New Mexico environment. A New Mexico constitutional Green Amendment is a must have for our beloved ‘Land of Enchantment’,” stated [Terry A. Sloan](#), Director of Southwest Native Cultures, Albuquerque, New Mexico, a leader in the Green Amendment movement since its inception here in New Mexico and nationally and an ECOSOC accredited member of the United Nations.

“A growing chorus of grassroots supporters, organizations, communities, and legislators are prioritizing our resources-scarce state through the NM Green Amendment. For too long our right to a clean environment has been denied, violated, or forgotten by all levels of government. Our People and environment are hurting. This constitutional right to clean water, air, and soil is vital to life. The People of New Mexico deserve a chance to vote on this measure, and we remain hopeful our State officials allow us this opportunity to make this vote,” explained **Nicole Olonovich, MSW, MBA, OIF Veteran. As a member organizer for OLÉ! NM, the Administrative Director of the Adelante Progressive Caucus of DPNM, a member of the Environmental Justice Caucus of DPNM, and a disabled war veteran.** “A single thread pulls these hats I wear together: The New Mexico Green Amendment that will protect environmental rights for all generations.”

“It's time to take back our rights to life on Earth. Clean air, water, and land are necessary and we shouldn't give in to polluters. Polluters should never prosper,” offered **CDR Athena Christodoulou, USN, Ret., energy and environmental engineer.**

“New Mexico is on the leading edge of the national movement to recognize environmental rights as fundamental inalienable rights deserving the same highest protection that is currently given to speech, religious, civil and property rights,” said **Maya van Rossum, author of the book [The Green Amendment and founder of the organization \[Green Amendments For The Generations\]\(#\)](#)** seeking to advance constitutional environmental rights nationally. van Rossum was also a lead plaintiff in the Pennsylvania case that secured constitutional environmental rights for the people of that state. “Our current system of environmental laws and government, in New Mexico and nationwide, focuses on permitting pollution rather than preventing it. By contrast, constitutional Green Amendments ensure government officials are making informed decisions focused on protecting environmental rights from the beginning of the decision-making process when protection is best accomplished. Green Amendments are also powerful for advancing environmental justice protections by ensuring government officials are protecting the environmental rights of all people and are constitutionally prohibited from creating environmental sacrifice zones,” added van Rossum.

“I strongly believe that there is much that can be done by state government agents as trustees of the natural resources of New Mexico in areas that call out for support of clean air and water, such as the Carlsbad, Chaco area and the South Valley of Albuquerque. With passage of the proposed Green Amendment officials will be constitutionally obligated to conserve, protect, and maintain our natural resources,” explains **Linda Starr, co-leader of the [Rio Grande Valley Broadband of Great Old Broads for Wilderness](#)**.

"Indivisible Nob Hill wholeheartedly supports a Green Amendment to the Bill of Rights in our New Mexico Constitution. We must stop the routine and systematic damage to our environment in the name of economic development and ensure we protect the clean air, pure water, healthy environment and ecosystems for all future generations of people, flora and fauna," stated **Rayellen Smith, President of [Indivisible Nob Hill](#)**, a leading supporter of the Amendment.

"People of faith throughout New Mexico believe caring for Sacred land, water, air, the health of communities and creation for future generations is a moral and spiritual responsibility that needs to be pro-active. New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light believes the time has come for forward thinking action, especially in light of the greater droughts and effects of a warming climate that we face. This constitutional amendment can be one very important tool to help our state and care for our diverse communities and sacred creation," stated **Sr. Joan Brown, of, Executive Director, [New Mexico & El Paso Region Interfaith Power and Light](#)**.

[350 Santa Fe](#) President Robert Cordingley welcomed the filing of the bill to add a ballot initiative for a New Mexico Green Amendment: “The urgency of establishing an enforceable constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment has become increasingly clear as we have watched the rapid warming of our planet and its emerging consequences. New Mexico's contributions to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere is disproportionately high, given our state's population, because of our significant levels of oil and gas activities and electrical generation. Embedding the protection of the environment into our state's founding document is a crucial step toward ensuring that our government and industries take decisive action to end these emissions as rapidly as possible. If corporations enjoy constitutional protection of their interests, our environmental interests deserve no less.”

“The Green Amendment is key to addressing climate change. It is empowering the people to ensure our governments stand with them to protect our environment from bad players in industry and it will ensure we all stand up for future generations,” stated **Cheryl Harris, [Adelante Progressive Caucus](#) Chair**. “Clean water and air, a stable climate and healthy environments are basic rights essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; it is wonderful to have New Mexico helping to be a leader among states in securing these basic rights,” Harris added.

If the Joint Resolution secures a majority vote of support in both the Senate and House of Representatives it will be placed on the next general election ballot for a vote by the people of the state.

Currently constitutional Green Amendments exist in Pennsylvania, Montana, and New York. In addition to New Mexico, constitutional environmental rights amendments are being

advanced in in Arizona, Washington, New Jersey, Hawaii, Delaware, Vermont, Iowa, West Virginia, Maine, Maryland and Kentucky.

Fact sheets, information and resources on the New Mexico Green Amendment movement can be found at www.NMGreenAmendment.org , information on what is happening in other states can be found at www.ForTheGenerations.org on the resources page.

The proposed New Mexico Joint Resolution reads as follows:

SECTION 1. It is proposed to amend Article 2 of the constitution of New Mexico by adding a new section to read:

A. The people of the state have the natural, inherent and inalienable right to a clean and healthy environment, including water, air, soil, flora, fauna, ecosystems, and climate, and to the protection of the natural, cultural, scenic and healthful qualities of the environment.

B. The protection of the state's environment is hereby declared to be of fundamental importance to health, safety and the public interest.

C. The state, including its political subdivisions, shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of New Mexico, and shall conserve, protect and maintain these resources for the benefit of all New Mexicans, including present and future generations.

D. The provisions of this section are self-executing. Money damages shall not be allowed under this section.

SECTION 2. It is proposed to amend Article 20 of the constitution of New Mexico by repealing Section 21.

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