

Thursday, September 20, 2012

*Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District spoke on the House floor this morning in support House Resolution 791, which recognizes the history and heritage of the state of New Mexico on its centennial anniversary. □ Below are his remarks as prepared.*

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a proud milestone in the history of the great state of New Mexico. This year marks the centennial anniversary of the Land of Enchantment. Filmmakers have spent years documenting the history and beauty of New Mexico, sharing the importance of our acequias, stories of history and tradition in ‘Canes of Power,’ stories and tales told by Rudolfo Anaya, art and landscapes captured by Georgia O’Keeffe.

“New Mexico has a long and rich heritage that is rooted in the shared history of a diverse population – a history that respects diversity and language, a land whose state constitution was drafted and adopted in both English and Spanish

“While Santa Fe, the City of Faith, holds the distinction as the oldest capital city in the country – celebrating 400 years last year – statehood came later in 1912, when a territory known for its beautiful scenery, natural wonders, and pristine landscapes was admitted into the Union as the 47th state.

“New Mexico is blessed with rich culture and landmarks – Chaco Canyon, Bandelier, Taos Gorge, Blue Lake, and the plaza in Santa Fe. Thousands of visitors each year travel to learn of the unique traditions and spirit that make New Mexico such a special place with blue skies, sunsets and sunrises, and starry nights you won’t find anywhere else in the world.

“The Land of Enchantment is home to a diverse population that can trace its roots back to Spanish, Mexican and Native American cultures – amongst others. As home to one of the richest indigenous tribal populations in the United States, New Mexico is proud of the influences and contributions of the 19 Pueblo nations, two Apache nations, and the Navajo Nation.

“These diverse cultures coming together to share a common bond of calling New Mexico home has served as a source of strength for our state, as the influence on art, architecture, and agriculture can be felt to this very day.

“During the past 100 years, New Mexico has had a proud tradition of service to our country. In World War II, Navajo Code Talkers contributed to victory for the Allied forces, while many native sons of New Mexico sacrificed in the battle of Bataan. In the Korean War, Hiroshi Miyamura of Gallup was awarded the Medal of Honor for his distinguished service. Most recently, Santa Fe native Sergeant Leroy Petry earned the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions in the face of great danger in Afghanistan. And in every war in between, New Mexicans have proudly defended our nation and answered the call of duty when they were needed most.

“New Mexico has also served our nation as a center for scientific innovation and research. Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories have been home to a number of scientific endeavors that have been important priorities for our nation.

“Mr. Speaker, as New Mexico celebrates 100 years of statehood, we are reminded of how special this beautiful land we call home is. As a native New Mexican, it is with great pride in our past and hope for our future that I come to this floor to recognize the enduring contributions of New Mexicans during the course of our state's history. A special love for our land and water helps shape our lives. A land of faith and family, culture and tradition, and, Mr. Speaker, the best chile found anywhere in the world.

“Ours is a special story, an American story, one passed from one generation to the next with our most precious lessons coming from our elders, our parents, and our grandparents. In the words of my parents, Ben and Carmen, when they send me off on any journey when I depart from home, ‘y que Dios les bendiga’ – ‘may God bless you.’”

# # #