

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release

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On a day dedicated as Hispanic Culture Day, the state Senate unanimously approved a memorial that tributes a late Hispanic educator from Albuquerque who is honored more in other states today than in New Mexico.

Senate Memorial 37, which passed 43-0, designated October 4, 2103, as "George I. Sanchez Day." Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino (Bernalillo, District 12), who sponsored the memorial, said it was unfortunate that the Albuquerque-born Sanchez is honored more in other states today than in New Mexico.

Senate Memorial 37, which passed 43-0, points out that 10 schools in Texas and three more in California were named after Dr. Sanchez, while there are none in the Land of Enchantment.

Sanchez was born in Albuquerque's Las Barelas neighborhood on October 4, 1906, and he became an educator at age 17, traveling by horseback to Yrisarri, New Mexico, 35 miles to and from Albuquerque. Two years later, he became principal at Griegos-Candelarias Consolidated Schools in Bernalillo County. He later went on to earn a degree from UNM while teaching at New Mexico Normal School (now New Mexico Highlands University).

After earning a master's in Texas and a doctorate in philosophy in California, he returned to New Mexico and influenced both educators and politicians. He then taught at the college level in Texas. His influence on students, teachers and politicians interested in education legislation made him a legend in the education circles of his time. The bill describes him as a "notable and distinguished scholar, educator, activist, pioneer and visionary in the early days of public education in New Mexico." He also extensively studied the Navajo culture.

His classic book, "Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans," offered a glimpse into the lives of 22 historic northern New Mexico villages and Senator Ortiz y Pino said the work influenced his own prior career when he taught at the old College of Santa Fe. Ortiz y Pino said the book continues to inspire those interested in New Mexico history and culture today.

In other action in the Senate:

Through Senate Memorial 28, sponsored by Senator Bill O'Neill (Bernalillo, District 13), the Senate also unanimously designated every third Saturday to be known as Celtic Heritage Day in New Mexico. The specific day was selected to coincide with the Highland Games and Celtic Festival held in Albuquerque during the same weekend.

During a recess of the Senate floor session, the senators were led by a mariachi band into a joint committee of the whole in the House of Representatives to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Day. Senator

Michael S. Sanchez (Valencia, Bernalillo, District 29) introduced keynote speaker Linda Alvarado, with an inspiring rags-to-riches story of a disadvantaged New Mexico native who went on to success in business and became the first Hispanic owner of a Major League baseball team – the Colorado Rockies. Alvarado, whose construction company was instrumental in many major projects in Denver, including the international airport and the new Denver Broncos football stadium, said Hispanics today cannot be stereotyped because they come in all shapes, sizes and colors and work at professional careers that defy the many stereotypes of the past. Senator Sanchez also paid tribute to the late Senator Ben Altimirano, whose family was present in the House chamber, and the Silver City native's bill that established Hispanic Culture Day.

The Senate Conservation Committee approved Senate Bill 219, sponsored by Senate Pro Tempore Mary Kay Papen (Dona Ana, District 38) that appropriates \$85,000 to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture to develop and promote farmers markets throughout the state.

Many representatives of farmers markets and small growers spoke against Senate Bill 234, which would add penalties to people who purposely "advertise, describe, label or offer for sale chile peppers using the name of any city, town, county, village, pueblo, mountain, river or other geographic feature or features located in New Mexico in a misleading or deceptive manner." A representative of a farmers market told the committee that the law was "excessive" and it would be difficult for growers who sell at the local markets to actually prove their New Mexico chile is authentic. An advocate for the bill said the intent of the legislation is aimed at larger distributors who falsely advertise and not aimed at the smaller growers. The committee recommended the passage of SB 234, sponsored by Senator George Munoz (Cibola, McKinley, San Juan, District 4) with one dissenting vote by committee chairman Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25).

The Senate Conservation Committee also unanimously approved an amended version of Senate Bill 70, sponsored by Senator Pete Campos (Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Taos, District 8), which would change the name of the state's "monuments" to "historic sites." After former state monuments' director Jose Cisneros objected to the name change, citing that not all of the sites could accurately be cited as historic, a compromise was reached. Department of Cultural Affairs cabinet secretary Veronica Gonzales told the committee that DCA officials and Cisneros agreed that an amendment to the bill would now officially call the locations "historic sites and monuments." Gonzales said that studies conducted by DCA and the Department of Tourism determined that "historic sites" resonated better with tourists and younger people and would help in advertising. Cisneros countered that low visitation to the locations was not because of the name but that the monuments needed to be advertised more.