



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor signs legislation taking action for missing and murdered indigenous women**

ALBUQUERQUE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Thursday enacted legislation delivering state resources to address and prevent cases of missing and murdered indigenous New Mexicans. Joined by state and tribal leaders, as well as family members of missing and murdered women and relatives, the governor signed Senate Bills 12 and 13, establishing a new position in the Attorney General’s office dedicated to missing persons and designating an annual event joining families of missing New Mexicans with investigative resources.

“New Mexico is taking action to bring together critical resources for families of our missing and murdered indigenous neighbors, helping to deliver justice for victims, bring their loved ones closure, and prevent these tragedies from happening to families,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “While these measures will not on their own bring an end to this crisis, they are important tools in our continued fight to deliver answers to families across the state and hold those responsible accountable. I thank the members of New Mexico’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force for their continued dedication to identifying solutions and delivering answers.”

Senate Bill 12, sponsored by Sen. Shannon Pinto, Sen. Linda M. Lopez, and Rep. Pamela Herndon, creates a Missing Persons Specialist position in the Office of the Attorney General dedicated to assisting with the investigation and prosecution of missing persons cases involving Indigenous persons believed to be victims pursuant to the Missing Persons Information and Reporting Act.

Announced by Gov. Lujan Grisham in December as an administration priority, Senate Bill 13, sponsored by Sen. Linda Lopez, Sen. Shannon Pinto, and Rep. Andrea Romero, creates a “Missing in New Mexico” day, an annual event bringing federal, state, local, and tribal governments together in one location to provide resources to families of missing individuals, including filing and updating missing persons reports, submitting DNA records, and meeting with investigators. The New Mexico Department of Public Safety will partner with the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) to host the annual event, supporting families by bringing resources and partners to a central location. The NamUs missing persons database and related divisions support the resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed

persons cases by offering case consultations, collecting biometric data (DNA, fingerprints, images), and offering training about this critical database to communities.

“Today is a great step forward in bringing accountability and justice to those families and victims of missing and murdered indigenous people,” said **Attorney General Hector Balderas**. “We will aggressively work to become a leader in the nation in addressing this scourge and stand side-by-side with our indigenous sisters and brothers to bring healing and justice.”

“I am grateful to Governor Lujan Grisham, our legislators, Tribal leaders, MMIWR Task Force, advocates and the countless relatives who supported this critical legislation,” said Indian Affairs Department **Secretary Lynn Trujillo**. “These bills complement each other to ensure that families are supported, communities have resources to find missing relatives, and we as a state can begin to address the challenges faced when working with multiple jurisdictions.”

“I would like to thank Governor Lujan Grisham, the members of the MMIWR Task Force, the Indian Affairs Department, Senator Lopez, Attorney General Balderas, Special Assistant to the AG Mark Probasco, and Assistant Attorney General Delilah Tenorio for their sustained assistance through the process,” said **Sen. Shannon Pinto**. “Also, all of the legislators who supported these measures, and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. This critical step forward will help unite our communities and New Mexico’s anguished families. A very special thanks and recognition goes to the relatives of the Missing and Murdered whose tireless and dedicated focus on this issue helped to get us to this place.”

“The families of New Mexico’s missing and murdered indigenous women and relatives have long deserved our attention and assistance,” said **Sen. Linda Lopez**. “I was pleased to see both measures that were recommended by the MMIWR Task Force receive such overwhelming support in the legislature and want to thank Governor Lujan Grisham for establishing the task force in 2019 and for signing these important bills today. This collaborative partnership and associated resources will help solve cases and bring justice to victims and their families.”

“Far too many families, particularly indigenous families, in New Mexico have felt the pain of a loved one going missing,” said **Rep. Andrea Romero**. “Missing in New Mexico Day is about shining a light on this epidemic and helping those families seek justice.”

“The families of Indigenous people who are missing deserve to know they are not forgotten,” said **Rep. Pamelya Herndon**. “Creating a specialized position within the Attorney General’s office gives these families the assurance that every effort will be made to locate their missing loved ones and reunite families, or to seek justice where too often there has been none.”

Senate Bills 12 and 13 are products of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, established by Gov. Lujan Grisham in 2019 and further expanded by executive order in 2021, tasked with identifying solutions to the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous New Mexicans. New Mexico currently has 926 missing persons reported across the state.

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