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New Mexico Legislature unanimously passes Turquoise Alert System to help locate missing Indigenous people

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Legislature has unanimously passed [Senate Bill 41](#), creating the state's new Turquoise Alert system designed specifically to assist in locating missing American Indians.

The bill awaits the governor's signature and will allow law enforcement to quickly share information about missing Indigenous individuals through various alert channels. New Mexico becomes the fourth state with a specialized alert system addressing the missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP) crisis.

“Too many Native American families have faced crisis and the heartbreak of a loved one disappearing without the swift response they deserve,” said **Josett D. Monette**, Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. “The Turquoise Alert System is a critical step forward in ensuring that missing Native American people are prioritized in the same way as other emergency alerts. This legislation reflects New Mexico’s unwavering commitment to justice and the safety of our Indigenous communities.”

The Turquoise Alert system will coordinate with state law enforcement agencies, tribal communities, and state resources to provide a rapid response when Native American individuals are reported missing. This system ensures that disappearances are met with swift action and heightened public awareness, closing critical gaps that have long impacted MMIP cases.

The Turquoise Alert system will function similarly to existing alert systems, like the Amber and Silver Alert, by rapidly disseminating information about missing Native

American individuals to the public through law enforcement channels, news media, social media, and digital highway signs. The New Mexico Department of Public Safety or the lead law enforcement agency will be responsible for issuing Turquoise Alerts, based on specific criteria to ensure an immediate and effective response.

According to the New Mexico Department of Justice, there are approximately 200 missing Indigenous people in the state, on average of over 1,600 days missing. The highest rates of MMIP occurs among individuals aged 30–39 and 40–49.

The alert plan requires detailed record-keeping about each Turquoise Alert, including information such as the municipality where the report originated, the missing person's age, gender, report date, alert issue date, and recovery date.

“I carry with me countless stories of how our system has failed to respond to the disappearance or murder of Native people in our state,” said sponsor **Sen. Angel Charley**. “We have answered the call to the opportunity to provide a system where we enhance the likelihood of located missing Native people and reuniting them with their loved ones.”

“Communities like mine are all too familiar with the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people. For years now, we have stepped up on our own to help locate our missing brothers and sisters through coordinated local efforts and on social media,” said sponsor **Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta** (D-To'hajiilee). “Establishing the Turquoise Alert will allow the state to amplify these community-led efforts to better ensure the protection and safe return of our loved ones.”

SB41 supports Objectives 5 and 6 of the [MMIP State Response Plan](#).

The New Mexico Indian Affairs Department extends its deepest gratitude to our sponsors for their unwavering leadership in sponsoring this critical legislation. Their advocacy has been instrumental in bringing the Turquoise Alert System to reality, marking a significant advancement in protecting Native communities.

The Turquoise Alert system will go into effect on July 1, 2025.

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Since 2003 the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (IAD) has implemented groundbreaking state-tribal policies intended to improve the quality of life for the state's Native citizens. Our initiatives are designed to strengthen Tribal and state relations and address the challenges we face in our communities: economic development, infrastructure improvement, the protection of our cultures and languages, health care accessibility, and educational opportunities for our most precious resource— our children. Learn more at www.iad.nm.gov.