

TOWN OF TOMÉ LAND GRANT



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FOUNDED 1739

May 8, 2026

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Support for H.R. 2785, New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes Historical or Traditional Use Cooperation and Coordination Act

Dear Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, and Rep. Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources; Rep. Tom Tiffany, Chairman, and Rep. Joe Neguse, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Lands:

The Town of Tomé Land Grant is writing this letter in support of the passage of **H.R. 2785, New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes Historical or Traditional Use Cooperation and Coordination Act** introduced by Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández of New Mexico (NM-03). This bill is critical in protecting the rights of Spanish and Mexican Land Grant-Merced communities to access natural resources on adjacent federal lands. In addition, the bill also provides the necessary framework for ensuring that these centuries old communities have a seat at the table when federal agencies are making land management decisions that could impact them. Land grants-mercedes from across New Mexico have suffered decades of social and economic hardship because of the incomplete recognition of our property rights to federal lands that once belonged to our communities.

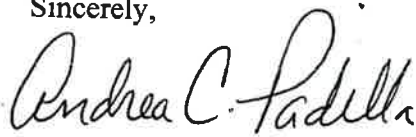
The Town of Tomé Land Grant was granted to our ancestors in 1739 and our community had enjoyed over a century of prosperity when it came time to file their claim with U.S. Surveyor General 1856. The survey completed by the U.S. Surveyor General office found the grant to have 121,594.23 acres, but deprived the grant of its timbered lands on the west face of the Manzano Mountains when it considered the foot, not the ridge, of the mountain to be the Town of Tomé Grant's eastern boundary. The New Mexico Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court both questioned the nature of the grant as community grant before ultimately upholding the rights of the Town of Tomé Grant to unallotted communal lands. Our grant lost the bulk of its land when outside interests induced the grant to convert from a community grant to a for-profit shareholding corporation, an action allowed by a 1967 New Mexico state law. The historical and

traditional use boundaries of our grant, nonetheless, include more than 50,000 acres that are today managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

H.R. 2785 will ensure that the Cibola National Forest consults with our land grant-merced when developing policy and management decision affecting federal lands to which we still retain historical and cultural connections. It will also strengthen our ability to partner with the U.S. Forest Service to ensure our that our can meaningfully access and utilize our former common lands now managed by the agency.

The Town of Tomé Land Grant Board of Trustees is in full support of this historic piece of legislation and asks for your support in getting this bill enacted into law.

Sincerely,



Andrea Padilla
President
Town of Tomé Land Grant

CC:

Representative Teresa Léger Fernández, New Mexico, 3rd District
Representative Melanie Stansbury, New Mexico, 1st District
Senator Ben R. Luján, New Mexico