

GILA MONSTER FOR STATE REPTILE

Presented by Lava Ridge Intermediate School Students

A State Reptile can:

- Help represent **Utah's values and characteristics**.
- Represent the **beauty and uniqueness** of the nature in Utah.
- Represent the **rangers, the biologists, and anyone** with a love of nature.
- Help others to **understand** what we, the **people of Utah** believe in.
- Bring **awareness** to the **diversity** of Utah's 55 native reptiles.



The Gila Monster represents many great qualities to have in a state symbol because:

- The Gila Monster is **near threatened** and **indigenous** to Utah, so we need to protect it.
- We, in **Southern Utah**, want something to **represent us**, because we are part of Utah too.
- The Gila Monster has also been here in Utah for over **100 million years** (since the times of the dinosaurs)
- The Gila Monster's **characteristics** would well represent the **stamina and perseverance** of Utahns, past and present.

The Gila Monster has many deep connections with Utah's Native Americans:

- Gila monsters were treated with respect by the Native American People
- The Navajo Tribes use the Gila Monster as a figure of power in many of their legends.
- Several tribes associated lizards with healing and survival.
- The pioneers had many things in common with the Gila Monster such as preservation, perseverance, and incredible stamina.
- It is important to learn about other cultures' stories. The Gila Monster can help us connect with the Native American Tribes that reside in Utah.

The Gila Monster and Diabetes Awareness

- The Gila Monster also has an important and unique feature that sets it apart:
- "One component of their venom, *exendin-4* has already been approved by the
- FDA ... (as) a drug used in the treatment of Type-II diabetes." says Dr. Heyborne, *{Herpetology Professor of Southern Utah University in Cedar City}*
- 10.4% of adults in Utah have Diabetes. The Gila Monster, as a state reptile, could help raise awareness of Diabetes and further efforts to lower the rate in Utah.

We would like the Gila monster to be Utah's State reptile because:

- If the Gila Monster becomes our State Reptile it will **raise awareness**. We can learn more about it, and help its population thrive.
- This reptile represents a lot of the great qualities that our amazing state Utah has, such as **perseverance, willing to fight for important things, and incredible stamina**.
- Gila monsters are **unique & irreplaceable**.

We representatives of the 70 students at Lava Ridge would like you House of Natural Resources Committee members to pass the new bill stating the Gila Monster as the State Reptile of Utah.

For more information on the Gila Monster and why it should be our state reptile, please visit our Gila Monster website: <https://sites.google.com/washk12.org/gila-monsters/home>