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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>Silva/Lara</u>	LAST UPDATED _____
	ORIGINAL DATE <u>2/8/25</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Chaparral Riding Circuit Court</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>House Bill 144</u>
	ANALYST <u>Chavez</u>

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
12 th Judicial District	No fiscal impact	At least \$2,250.0	At least \$150.0	At least \$2,400.0	Recurring	General Fund
Total	No fiscal impact	At least \$2,250.0	At least \$150.0	At least \$2,400.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Bill 188.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
 Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)
 Administrative Office of the District Attorneys (AODA)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From
 New Mexico Attorney General (NMAG)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of House Bill 144

House Bill 144 (HB144) would amend NMSA 1978 Section 35-1-22 to require the magistrate court in Otero County to ride circuit to Chaparral on a regular basis.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) provides the following:

Based on other court buildings and similarly situated circuit courts, the judiciary would

require a minimum of \$2,000,000 capital outlay appropriation to build a new facility and a minimum of \$250,000 increase to the 12th Judicial District's operating budget. The increase to the operating budget is based on the need to hire court staff, purchase equipment and furnishings, update materials, and educate justice partners and the public about the new court location. The courthouse would also need to include security outfitting and staffing. The annual cost of the new court location would be \$150,000 minimum per year, plus lease costs if the Judiciary does not own the building.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

AOC notes:

The bill requires the Otero County Magistrate Court to begin riding circuit to Chaparral on June 20, 2025. Even if the bill were amended and provided adequate appropriations to build and staff the new courthouse, there are multiple facilities projects underway that take precedence due to the caseload or safety concerns with the current locations. The soonest this project could be completed is the end of fiscal year 2029.

The Otero County side of Chaparral is less populated than the Dona Ana County side and serves as a bedroom community for El Paso, Texas. The area is policed by the Otero County Sheriff's Department and the New Mexico State Police. These law enforcement agencies file their traffic and other cases in the Alamogordo magistrate court and would likely continue to do so regardless of whether a courthouse existed in Chaparral.

The magistrate judges are in the middle of their terms and were elected by Otero County to preside in the Alamogordo courthouse. Changing the seat where they preside in the middle of a term is ill-advised.

AOC also notes:

All magistrate courts in New Mexico, including circuit courts, are open to the public 40 hours per week. New Mexico does not have part-time magistrate courts. Without a workload study, it is impossible to know whether the two existing magistrates are sufficient to operate a circuit court.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

HB144 relates to House Bill 188, which would require Dona Ana magistrate courts to ride circuit Chaparral, Anthony, Sunland Park, and Hatch.

ALTERNATIVES

AOC recommends the following:

The AOC and the 12th Judicial District recommend the use of a justice station in lieu of a circuit court. Further, the AOC recommends that workload and usage studies should precede the creation of a new court.