



### Significant Issues

At present, the federal Veterans' Administration has no plans for establishing new or expanding existing veterans' cemeteries in New Mexico. However, the New Mexico congressional delegation has expressed support to do so. It is estimated that the cemetery in Santa Fe will use all its available space in approximately ten years. There is sufficient available space for expansion at the Fort Bayard National Cemetery in southwest New Mexico. States may establish their own veterans' cemeteries. The federal government will provide grants for establishing and initial maintenance assistance to state veterans' cemeteries. This process is being used to convert the state-owned cemetery in Fort Stanton to a state veterans' cemetery. Once the grant funds for a specific location are used, maintenance and administrative costs are state responsibility. GSD expresses support for the Fort Stanton cemetery being a state-owned veterans' cemetery. Once the federal grant is received, Fort Stanton will serve veterans from south central and southeast New Mexico. The State Land Office notes that if state trust lands are identified for use as a cemetery that the trust must be compensated for the value of the land.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The appropriation of \$50.0 contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of 2003 shall not revert to the general fund but would remain in the Veterans' Cemetery Fund.

This bill creates a new fund and allows for future revenues that may accrue from other sources. The LFC objects to including continuing appropriation language in the statutory provisions for newly created funds. Earmarking reduces the ability of the legislature to establish spending priorities. However, the bill states no additional funding is provided for this fund besides the initial \$50.0 appropriation.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

VSC will have to establish the fiscal year 2003 budget from the Veterans' Cemetery Fund through a budget adjustment request. VSC will have to determine the best and most cost effective method of conducting the survey of available land to find candidate locations for a state veterans' cemetery in the Rio Rancho area. VSC indicates it will probably perform the survey through a contract.

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

The bill does not impose any reporting requirements on the VSC. It is recommend that page 3, line 18 be changed to read: "suitability for a state veterans' cemetery. The veterans' service commission will report its findings to the forty-sixth legislature. Any unexpended or"

GAC/ar/njw