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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/07/06

SPONSOR Rodriguez LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Court Interpreter Raises SB 292

ANALYST McSherry

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
\$300.0		Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Partially duplicates current H AFC recommendation for a \$150 thousand dollar appropriation in the General Appropriation Act which was included in the LFC recommendation for the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Companion to: House Bill 248.

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY06	FY07	FY08	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
Total		\$100.0		\$100.0	Non-Rec	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 292, "Court Interpreter Raises" appropriates \$300,000 from the general fund to the Administrative Office of the Courts for the purpose of increasing the hourly court interpreter salary from \$30/hour to \$50/hour. The bill has an emergency clause which would allow the funds to be used in fiscal year 2006 as well as 2007.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$300,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2007 shall revert to the general fund.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) estimated in their FY07 operating budget request that \$300 thousand would fund an increase in court interpreter salaries from \$30 to \$50/hour for one year. The bill proposes \$300 thousand for the remainder of FY06 and for the course of FY07. The estimated additional operating budget impact was based on the use of 1/3 of the appropriated \$300 thousand (\$100 thousand) during the remainder of FY06, and the need for an additional \$100 thousand in FY07 to fully fund the proposed interpreter increases.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

According to AOC, the hourly wages paid by the AOC for court interpreters are significantly less than those paid in federal courts, NM Workers Compensation (50-60/hour), and private hires (\$60-\$90/hour).

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

AOC has not proposed performance measures and targets corresponding to this appropriation. It would be hoped that the proportion of certified interpreters used in the NM courts would increase and that the level of satisfaction with the quality of interpreters would improve with the ability to pay interpreters a competitive rate.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The increased funding for interpreter salaries could result in lessened administrative burden to find and schedule an interpreter.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

This bill is a companion to House Bill 248, and partially duplicates current HAFC budget recommendation for the AOC which includes \$150 thousand for the 2007 fiscal year to increase interpreters' hourly wages from \$30/hour to \$40/hour.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

If SB 292 is not passed, interpreters will not receive hourly wages increases in FY06. If the bill does not pass and the HAFC's current recommendation to increase wages from \$30 to \$40/hour is not maintained, court interpreters would not receive raises in FY07. If the bill does not pass, but the current HAFC recommendation does, interpreters will receive hourly raises to \$40/hour.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. What is the expected growth in the statewide court interpreter pool with the proposed wage increases?
2. Are interpreters currently paid travel expenses? If so, would they still be paid travel expenses if the proposed wage increase takes effect? If so, do the other agencies and entities used in the provided salary comparison also fund travel costs?
3. Will \$300 thousand be sufficient to fund the proposed wage increases from \$30/hour to \$50/hour for both the remainder of FY06 and the entirety of FY07? If so, why was \$300 thousand requested by the AOC for FY07 alone?

EM/mt