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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/25/06

SPONSOR Carraro LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE NAVAJO CODE TALKER DOCUMENTARY FILM SB 336

ANALYST Weber

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
\$250.0		Non-Rec	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From  
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 336 appropriates \$250 thousand from the general fund to the Indian Affairs Department for the purpose of producing a documentary on Navajo code talkers that notes the code talker's contribution during World War II. The funds may be expended in FY06 and FY07.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$250 thousand contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY07 shall revert to the general fund.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Indian Affairs Department documents the following:

The United States was at war in Europe, and on December 7, 1941, were faced with a second front as the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor.

One of the intelligence weapons the Japanese military possessed was an elite group of well trained English speaking soldiers, used to intercept U.S. communications, then sabotage the message or issue false commands to ambush American troops. Military code became more and

more complex – at Guadalcanal, military leaders complained that it took two and one half hours to send and decode a single message.

After being convinced of the possibility of success by the son of a missionary who was raised on the Navajo reservation, the Marine Corps called upon the Navajo Nation to support the military effort by recruiting and enlisting Navajo men to serve as Marine Corps Radio Operators. These Navajo Marines, who became known as the Navajo Code Talkers, used the Navajo language to develop a unique code to communicate military messages in the South Pacific. The code developed by these Native Americans proved unbreakable and was used throughout the Pacific theater.

Their accomplishment was even more heroic given the cultural context in which they were operating. Subjected to alienation in their own homeland and discouraged from speaking their own language, they still stepped forward and developed the most significant and successful military code of the time. The Code was so successful that military commanders credited it with saving the lives of countless American soldiers and the successful engagements of the U.S. in the battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. At Iwo Jima, Major Howard Connor, 5th Marine Division signal officer, declared, "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." Major Connor had six Navajo Code Talkers working around the clock during the first 48 hours of the battle. Those six sent and received over 800 messages, all without error.

In fact, the code was so successful that the Department of Defense kept the Code secret for 23 years after the end of World War II, when it was finally declassified in 1968 – and there lies the foundation of the problem. If their achievements had been hailed at the conclusion of the war, proper honors would have been bestowed at that time. But the Code Talkers were sworn to secrecy, an oath they kept and honored, but at the same time, one that robbed them of the very accolades and place in history they so rightly deserved. Their ranks include veterans of Guadalcanal, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa; they gave their lives at New Britain, Bougainville, Guam, and Peleliu. But, at the end of the war, these unsung heroes returned to their homes on buses – no parades, no fanfare, no special recognition for what they had truly accomplished – because while the war was over, their duty – their oath of secrecy – continued. When the secrecy surrounding the code was finally declassified, only then did a realization of the sacrifice and valor of these brave Native Americans begin to emerge. ([www.bingaman.senate.gov](http://www.bingaman.senate.gov)).

The Navajo Code Talkers each received gold and silver Congressional Medals after introduction of federal legislation, Honoring the Navajo Code Talkers Act” (P.L. 106-554), by New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman in 2000. These medals are express recognition by the United States of America and its citizens of the Navajo Code Talkers who distinguished themselves in performing a unique, highly successful communications operation that greatly assisted in saving countless lives and in hastening the end of World War II in the Pacific theater. ([www.bingaman.senate.gov](http://www.bingaman.senate.gov)).

This bill would document the contributions and achievements of the Navajo Code Talkers. Part of this effort would involve the State partnering with the Navajo Nation, with the Navajo Code Talkers Association and the remaining Navajo Code Talkers still alive to tell their stories, especially in the history of the Navajo Nation before and after World War II.