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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1-20-2007  
 LAST UPDATED 2/9/07      HB 210/HHGACS

SPONSOR HHGAC

SHORT TITLE Free Access to Parks and Museums for Veterans      SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Dearing

### REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08	FY09		
	*\$.1	*\$.1	Recurring	*Other
	*Please see narrative	*Please see narrative		

Figure 1. \*Admissions revenue for Cultural Affairs facilities is deposited into a special revenue fund.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Department of Cultural Affairs (CAD)  
 Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (505)  
 Veterans' Services Department (VSD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

The House Health and Government Affairs Committee Substitute significantly amends Sections 16-2-7 1 and 28-13A-1 NMSA 1978. The substitution will provide annual free day-pass access to state parks and state recreation areas one and one, three-day camping pass to veterans with a 50 percent or more disability rating. Additionally, the substitute extends free use of state parks and state recreation areas to the all veterans and adds their spouse the formerly included dependent children, on Veterans' Day only. The bill strikes subsection 28-13A-1 (a) 2. NMSA 1978 previously allowing free admittance for veterans to Cultural Affairs department facilities on Veterans' day and adds language to allow free access to museums and monuments for veterans with a 50 percent or more disability rating year round.

House Bill 210/HHGACS amends section 28-13A-1 (c) NMSA 1978. House Bill 210/HHGACS carries no appropriation from the general fund. If enacted, New Mexico veterans would be extended access to the museum and monument facilities at no charge for the entire year. House Bill 210/HHGACS repeals section 16-2-7.1 NMSA 1978. House Bill 210/HHGACS makes

minor linguistic changes to bring this section up to date with current references to terms and facility names mentioned within this section of statute.

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The fiscal impact from enactment of House Bill 210/HHGACS would reduce admissions revenue that the Cultural Affairs department currently collects. Under section 16-2-7.1 NMSA 1978, veterans' rated with at a 100 percent disability rating are eligible to obtain a day pass to New Mexico's state park facilities at no charge, valid for the entire year.

\*The legislation would extend this benefit to those veterans with a minimum 50 percent disability.

Additionally, the legislation would amend statute to extend free entrance to state parks and museum and monument facilities to spouses of military veterans on the legal federal holiday of Veterans' Day. Currently, dependent children are extended this exemption for state parks, but not monument museums and monuments. Under the legislation, the Veterans' Day exemption would be extended to dependent children at museum and monument facilities as well as state parks. Because the department does not collect any detailed level of demographic data, it is difficult to estimate the revenue lost from this one-day admissions fee exemption. However, the following paragraph explains that a majority of:

\*of the departments Museums and Monuments currently allow free entrance by children under 16, and many extend this to children under 12. The proposed law states that children must be "dependent children" of veterans in order to receive free admission on Veterans' day. The waiver of admissions would thereby include only those children aged 16-18 in some museums and 12-18 in still fewer others. Spouses could attend free as well. In looking at the effects on revenue, a smaller revenue reduction would occur under the HHGAC substitute than the estimated \$170 thousand calculated with the original bill. Free access would apply only one day of the year.

The proposed legislation creates a recurring appropriation of other state revenues. The LFC has concerns with including continuing appropriation language in the statutory provisions as earmarking reduces the ability of the legislature to establish spending priorities.

Attendance revenue in FY06 at all museums and monuments statewide was \$1.95 million. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, New Mexico's total population was 1.93 million, with a subsequent veteran population of 180,200. Although the Cultural Affairs department does not keep detailed demographic data on visitors, an assumption can be made that the visitors to facilities are similar in demographic make-up.<sup>1</sup> Having no in-depth attendance survey, it is difficult to estimate the number of veterans that could be expected to take advantage of this benefit, such that lost revenue is unknown.

## **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

Although the Cultural Affairs department does not currently collect demographic data, the

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau & U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs population data, July 1, 2005 & 2004, respectively. Total New Mexico Population = 1,928,384; Total New Mexico veteran classified population = 180,200. Cultural Affairs department admissions revenue for in FY05 and FY06 was \$1,920,858 and \$1,946,900 respectively, averaging \$1,933,878.

enactment of House Bill 210/HHGACS would simplify data collection for Veteran attendance. Suggestions for performance measures regarding this legislation include an attendance related measure.

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

House Bill 210/HHGACS makes minor linguistic changes to bring terms and references up to date with current references and facility names mentioned within 28-13A-1 NMSA 1978.

There is some question as to what type of proof of enlistment would be required. All veterans are issued a discharge certificate upon the end of their enlistment. Additionally, disabled veterans receiving treatment at the Veterans Administration Medical Center are issued an ID card, while retiring veterans are issued a retiree-status card.

PD/mt