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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 3-14-2007

SPONSOR Rodriguez LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Services for Veterans and Military Families SB 617

ANALYST Dearing

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	\$469.3	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

None received

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 617 appropriates \$469.3 thousand from the general fund for expenditure in FY07 and FY08 to Veterans' Service department to expand services to serve veterans, active duty families and women veterans in particular. Enactment of Senate Bill 617 includes funding for a therapy pilot program, trauma treatment, support groups, an on-site women's veterans' service officer. Additionally, the bill provides for a study for the pilot program.

Senate Bill 617 declares an emergency.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$469.3 thousand contained in Senate Bill 617 is a recurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY08 shall revert to the General Fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Senate Bill 617 does not specify the location of an on-site women's veterans' service officer.

Senate Bill 617 does not specify the cause of trauma mentioned in the bill. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a common source of stress for returning veterans, and has been shown to be particularly debilitating among female service members.¹ The following excerpts on PTSD research are provided by the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, an element of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event. A traumatic event is a life-threatening event such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adult or childhood. Most survivors of trauma return to normal given a little time. However, some people will have stress reactions that do not go away on their own, or may even get worse over time. These individuals may develop PTSD.

People with PTSD experience three different kinds of symptoms. The first set of symptoms involves reliving the trauma in some way such as becoming upset when confronted with a traumatic reminder or thinking about the trauma when you are trying to do something else. The second set of symptoms involves either staying away from places or people that remind you of the trauma, isolating from other people, or feeling numb. The third set of symptoms includes things such as feeling on guard, irritable, or startling easily.²

The Veterans' Services department provides counseling for PTSD at only 3 of their 18 field offices in the state. According to testimony given by the department at an April, Health Policy Commission meeting, a certified caregiver or counselor would be necessary in each of their offices that would be familiar with VA protocol and would be able to deal with PTSD behavioral problems to both the veteran and his or her family. The department recommends that there be a certified behavioral health counselor at each VA service providing facility.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

In all likelihood, the incidence of PTSD among returning and separating service members could increase due to recent combat activities.

PD/csd

¹ Women's Stress Disorder Treatment Team; *Albuquerque-based New Mexico Veterans Affairs Health Care System*, <http://www.treatmentonline.com/treatments.php?id=1085>

² PTSD Definition, National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/fact_shts/fs_what_is_ptsd.html