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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/29/09

SPONSOR Lovejoy LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Study Uranium Contamination Health Effects SB 223

ANALYST Chabot

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	\$200.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)

Energy, Minerals and National Resources Department (EMNRD)

New Mexico Health Policy Commission (HPC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 223, Study Uranium Contamination Health Effects, appropriates \$200.0 thousand from the general fund to DOH for the purpose of for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive study of the adverse effects on the human health resulting from contamination from uranium mining and milling activities in New Mexico.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$200 thousand contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2011 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The LFC submitted a balanced general fund appropriation recommendation for fiscal year 2010. Any additional general fund expenditures appropriated by the Legislature must be off-set by an equal amount from the appropriation recommendation.

According to the December 2008 revenue estimate, FY10 recurring revenue will only support a base expenditure level that is \$293 million, or 2.6 percent, less than the FY09 appropriation. All appropriations outside of the general appropriation act will be viewed in this declining revenue context.

According to EMNRD, there has been no comprehensive study of the human health effects of past uranium mining in New Mexico. From 1950 through 1980, New Mexico was the largest producer of uranium in the world, and in 1978 the uranium mining industry employed approximately seven thousand people. Over 100,000 people live in McKinley and Cibola Counties where most of the uranium mining took place.

DOH refers to a American Journal of Public Health that states radioactive and hazardous waste pile may affect the health of residents when drinking contaminated water, breathing contaminated air, or eating contaminated agricultural crops.

HPC refers to the US Department of Energy statement that the main radiation hazard from uranium occurs when uranium compounds are ingested or inhaled. However, persons in the vicinity of large quantities of uranium are exposed to low levels of external radiation from uranium decay products. At these exposure levels, there is an increased probability of the exposed individual developing cancer.

DOH would use the appropriation to hire 1 FTE and would contract with the University of New Mexico Community Environment Health program for the planning and study.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

SB 223 relates to the DOH 2010 Strategic Plan; Improving Community Health, Objective 4: Identify and reduce environmental exposures harmful to public health.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

SB 223 is sponsored by the Indian Affairs Committee and the Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committees.

ALTERNATIVES

The Department of Defense (DOD) conducted extensive studies on the effects of uranium dust. Many tests were conducted at Kirtland AFB by the Inhalation Toxicology Research Institute, now the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute (LRRI) in Albuquerque. Recommend LRRI be contacted for collaboration before beginning a new study. (LFC analyst has personal knowledge of the DOD study.)

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

The proposed study will not be funded.

GAC/svb