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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/18/09

SPONSOR Griego, P. LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE No State Police College Credit Required SB 511

ANALYST Weber

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Conflicts with SB 426

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 511 amends 29-2-6 NMSA 1978 so that any college credit at the time of appointment as a State Police officer is eliminated. The current basic requirement is 60 hours of credit with the proviso that the second 30 can be earned within two years of appointment.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified fiscal implications.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

DPS offers the following input on the bill.

The New Mexico State Police have implemented programs that rely upon college credit hours for promotion and the department believes that higher education benefits the employee and department. The department has a tuition assistance program that any of the officers can

participate in. It is the goal of the department to have our employees always seek higher education to benefit him/her self and the agency.

The Department of Public Safety and the New Mexico State Police are opposed to this bill. We feel that the Chief should have the discretion to extend the time the officer has to obtain the college credit hours without eliminating the college credit requirements. (this is in reference to SB 426 that allows the Chief to use discretion in the time period allowed to earn the second 30 hours of college credit).

HED comments on the higher education implications of this bill.

The Department of Public Safety's State Police Division (NMSP) boasts "Pride" and "Excellence" as two of its core values. In order to achieve these values, the State Police raised its standards in the late 1990s to include college credit as one of its employment qualifications. According to NMSP Chief Farron Segotta, education does not play a role to be accepted to the Law Enforcement Academy. If they do not have earned college credits already, recruits are given the opportunity to earn their minimum 30 credit requirement while in the Academy. Officers are then given two years to meet the statutory requirement of 60 college credit hours in any subject.

This bill would eliminate educational requirements in the existing statute. It is usually the case that professions increase educational requirements and highly unusual to eliminate them. It is highly unusual for professional organizations to reduce educational requirements. Police must be familiar with evidentiary procedures and, increasingly technical and legal standards for documenting cases and securing evidence.

The NMSP Law Enforcement Academy is recognized and accredited by the Commission for Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Accreditation is based on the highest standards applied to an Agency's best practices and policies. The NMSP currently has an articulation agreement with San Juan College, Santa Fe Community College, and University of the Southwest for specific college courses in subjects such as Criminal Justice, Law, Traffic, and Police Proficiency.

The Chief also noted that NMSP has a policy that in order to rise up in rank, additional education is required. Pay and promotional rank are tied to earned college credit or college degree earned. According to the NMSP website, pay is associated with rank, and education is associated with the level of pay. The NMSP education benefits to officers include:

- Tuition assistance for up to 100% of tuition costs.
- Four hours per week of work time to attend online classes or to attend school.
- Education Incentive Pay for degrees (bachelor's-\$100/Month, master's-\$125/Month).

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

State police in Colorado and Arizona must only have a high school degree or G.E.D. Texas requires an Associate's degree or a minimum of 90 semester hours from an accredited college or university.

MW/mt