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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 3/7/09

SPONSOR Griego, E LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Study NM Veterans' Court SM 74

ANALYST Wilson

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Memorial 74 requests the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Veterans' Services Department (VSD) and the Department Of Military Affairs (DMA) commence a joint study of the feasibility of establishing a New Mexico veterans court, including an analysis of projected caseloads and costs for the purpose of providing just and constructive interventions for United States combat veterans alleged to have broken the law when the alleged infraction is possibly related to traumatic brain injury or behavioral health issues.

The three agencies are requested to write a report and present it to the appropriate interim legislative committee by October 1, 2009.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fiscal impact.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

New Mexico is home to more than 180,000 veterans, some 10,000 of them Native Americans, according to the VSD.

Most of those veterans have served during wartime, including almost 40,000 who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

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Military veterans in New Mexico have an estimated economic impact of more than \$1,000,000,000 according to the VSD.

Post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury from wartime engagement, substance abuse and psychological problems may be more common among combat veterans upon their return home.

These problems may cause a formerly law-abiding veteran to commit infractions of the law.

Some states and local communities have started veterans' courts to divert veterans who commit crimes into programs directed at recovery from addictions, mental illness, post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury.

Many of the veterans' courts result from concerns that the numbers of returning soldiers will only increase for some years to come.

A significant number of veterans' courts involve job-placement services and psychological counseling as part of their jail-diversion programming.

The states and local communities with veterans' courts have predicted that significant savings will result from diverting veterans from expensive incarceration to socially productive programs that will aid society as they aid veterans.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The affected agencies should be able to handle the enforcement of the provisions in this bill as part of ongoing responsibilities.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

The Senate Finance Committee substitute for SB 365 establishes abg Task Force to study the possibility of creating a veterans' court in New Mexico.

DW/mc