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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 03/12/09

SPONSOR Lopez LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE West Mesa Grave Site Victims, In Memory SM 85

ANALYST Weber

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

The Albuquerque Police Department has unearthed the remains of 13 individuals buried in an apparent mass grave on the West Mesa of Albuquerque, and the police and sheriff consider the site to be a developing crime scene and believe that most of the remains belong to women who were buried there by the same individual or individuals. Victoria Chavez, who was last seen in 2003 and reported missing in 2004, was the first woman whose remains were identified by police; Gina Michelle Valdez, who had been missing since September 2004, was the second woman whose remains were identified by police; and, most recently, the remains of Cinnamon Elks, who had also been missing since 2004, were identified by police. The Albuquerque police department has compiled a list of women who have been reported missing, which includes Darlene Maria Trujillo, missing since 2001; Sonia Bernadette Lente, missing since 2002; Monica Diana Candelaria, missing since 2003; Jamie Barela, missing since 2004; Virginia Ann Cloven, missing since 2004; Doreen Márquez, missing since 2004; Julie Cyndie Nieto, missing since 2004; Anselma Guerra, missing since 2004; Evelyn Jesúsmaria Salazar, missing since 2004; Veronica Romero, missing since 2004; Anna Vigil, missing since 2005; Shawntell Waites, missing since 2005; Nina Herron, missing since 2005; Felipa Gonzales, missing since 2005; and Leah Rachelle Peebles, missing since 2006. Families of missing women from across New Mexico file missing persons reports with police, to no avail, and these families continue to search, in agony and without support, for their loved ones. According to the federal bureau of investigation's national crime information center, there were 50,930 active adult missing persons cases reported in the United States as of January 2007.

The women whose remains have been identified in the West Mesa mass grave site have been depicted by both the police and many members of the media not as victims of violence and crime, but rather as criminals themselves. The labeling of these victims creates an atmosphere of ambivalence with regard to the crimes that have been perpetrated against them, while also denying their humanity and their role in our communities as daughters, mothers, sisters, cousins, nieces and granddaughters. The deceased and missing women of New Mexico deserve diligence and respect under the law and in our public discourse, while their families deserve the right to carry their memories with dignity. Communities across New Mexico are seeking further details and a more thorough explanation of the Albuquerque Police Department's and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's treatment of the crime committed against these women, in relation to the collection of evidence at the mass grave and in relation to the methods that were used to determine the facts of the disappearances.

New Mexico has the second-highest rate of women living in poverty and the third-highest domestic violence rate in the United States, and thousands of New Mexican women are not safe in their own homes, in their intimate relationships or in public spaces, and they lack the resources they need to escape the cycle of violence that traps them.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition of the heinous crimes that have been perpetrated against Victoria Chavez, Gina Michelle Valdez, Cinnamon Elks and the ten other "Jane Does" of the West Mesa mass grave and in recognition of the missing women of New Mexico whose loss continues to be felt in communities across the state, the Albuquerque Police Department and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department be urged to proceed with due diligence in resolving these murders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the mayor of Albuquerque and the members of the Bernalillo county commission join in the effort proposed by this resolution to ensure that these crimes are thoroughly investigated and that the resources of the federal bureau of investigation, the Albuquerque police department and the Bernalillo county sheriff's department be employed in the most expeditious manner possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the media change its focus from an emphasis on the victims' characters and lifestyles to the provision of details of the heinous crimes that resulted in the mass grave on the West Mesa of Albuquerque; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state of New Mexico ensure that services be available for addiction treatment and rehabilitation for women in need of such services and that state policy and funding be directed toward providing those services to the women who need them rather than toward the criminalization and incarceration of those women; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all New Mexicans be encouraged to show their support for women who are victims of violence or who are missing and for their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the mayor of Albuquerque, the chair of the Bernalillo County Commission, the chief of the Albuquerque Police Department and the Bernalillo County Sheriff.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no apparent direct costs related to this memorial.

MW/svb