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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Jeff & Munoz **ORIGINAL DATE** 01/29/14
LAST UPDATED 02/01/14 **HB** 64

SHORT TITLE Native American Veterans Division **SB** _____

ANALYST Esquibel

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY14	FY15	FY16	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	\$50.0	\$80.0	\$80.0	\$210.0	Recurring	General

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From
 Veterans' Services Department (VSD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 64 would create a Native American Veteran Division within the Veterans' Services Department (VSD) and lists the following responsibilities for the division:

- Conduct outreach to Native American veterans and Native American veterans organizations;
- Act as a liaison between Native American veterans, organizations, the department, as well as the state and federal governments;
- Assist Native American veterans to organize and advocate for benefits and services unique to Native Americans.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill contains no appropriation.

The creation of a new division within the VSD would require additional operating funds to carry out the expanded mission. The Veterans' Services Department indicates under the provisions of

the bill, it would be required to hire 2 full-time equivalent (FTEs) positions, provide office space, phones, travel, and other expenses. The Indian Affairs Department indicates the creation of the new Native American Veterans Division would require additional personnel where Native American veterans are located in Albuquerque as well as the other 18 Pueblos and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Veterans' Services Department (VSD) indicates it currently employs two Native Americans who serve as veteran services officers. One serves the northern and eastern agencies of the Navajo Nation. Another serves the Pueblos and Mescalero Apache Nation. VSD is in the process of hiring another veteran service officer to serve in the west central part of the state. VSD also is in the planning stages of developing a training curriculum for Native American veteran service officers who will be appointed by their local tribal leaders. This training will help develop service officers from local communities to assist Native American veterans while being conscious of local cultural practices. VSD also has a Veteran Business Outreach Center that works with Native Americans around the state interested in starting or growing their own businesses. VSD partners with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and their Native American outreach office to better serve the Native American veteran population in New Mexico.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The Indian Affairs Department indicates Native American veterans have historically been one of the lowest minorities to take advantage of their veterans' benefits, at both state and federal levels.

The VSD indicates the department has 3 Native American Veteran Service Officers that serve Farmington, Gallup and the Isleta areas. The VSD also has 2 other service officers that serve Taos and the Mescalero Apache Reservations. The Department currently relies on these service officers to handle outreach to Native American regions and advocate for Native American veteran issues. The VSD indicates it coordinates with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the federal VA Office of Indian Affairs, and with various independent Native American agencies and veterans' groups.

RAE/jl