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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Trujillo, CH ORIGINAL DATE 1/17/2017
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 12
SHORT TITLE Close Certain Taos Magistrate Courts SB _____
ANALYST Downs

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY17	FY18	FY19	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	NFI	(\$26.4)	(\$26.4)	(\$52.8)	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 12 amends Sections 35-1-5 NMSA 1978 to eliminate the magistrate circuit court in Quemado, New Mexico, and amends Sections 35-1-32 NMSA 1978 to eliminate the magistrate circuit court in Questa, New Mexico.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

House Bill 12 would reduce the operating costs of the magistrate court program in the Administrative Office of the Courts by at least \$26.4 thousand annually through cancellation of the leases and elimination of judge and staff travel costs and time.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The closure of these two magistrate courts has been approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts, by the 7th and 8th district judges, and by the Magistrate Judges Association. According to the Administrative Office of the Courts, there have been 14 cases filed in Quemado and 267 cases filed in Questa thus far in FY17. Going forward, all cases will be filed in the county seat.

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The Questa and Quemado magistrate courts are only staffed when court is in session, and judges and support staff travel from other courts to staff them. In light of the magistrate program's 15 percent vacancy rate, using staff time to travel to under used courts strains the already short-staffed judiciary.

JD/jle