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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

**SPONSOR** Dow/Garcia/Baca/ Crowder      **ORIGINAL DATE** 2/7/22      **LAST UPDATED** \_\_\_\_\_      **HB** 168  
**SHORT TITLE** Disabled Veteran Transportation      **SB** \_\_\_\_\_  
**ANALYST** Klundt

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY22	FY23		
\$1,000.0		Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From  
Veterans' Services Department (VSD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 168 (HB168) appropriates \$1 million from the general fund to establish a program to provide disabled veterans with transportation to and from medical appointments.

There is no effective date of this bill. It is assumed that the effective date is 90 days following adjournment of the Legislature.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY25 shall revert to the general fund. Although HB168 does not specify future appropriations, establishing a new program could create an expectation that the program will continue in future fiscal years, therefore this cost is scored as recurring.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico Veterans' Services Department (VSD) reported the department has, "an overall mission to provide the highest care, service, and advocacy for the men and women—and their

families—who have served as members of the United States Armed Forces. There are over 151 thousand veterans in New Mexico. The need for veterans to access healthcare is essential. As New Mexico is a highly rural state, transportation to medical appointments is challenging and sometimes impossible, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. The aging veteran population contributes to the need for additional transportation due to the progression of their overall health and disabilities.

Through a grant from the Veteran Administration (VA) the DVS Healthcare Coordination Division launched the Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) program in January 2020 to address the lack of transportation options for veterans to VA-eligible health care. First year funding was \$102 thousand. The current grant is \$135 thousand. Fifteen rural counties served by the HRTG: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance and Union Counties. Additional transportation services are needed, particularly in Hidalgo, Sierra, Lincoln, Cibola, and Catron Counties. In many cases, veterans have appointments at the VA hospital in Albuquerque, Amarillo, and El Paso, Texas, resulting in thousands of miles traveled for one medical appointment.”

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