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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Pinto **ORIGINAL DATE** 02/05/14
LAST UPDATED _____ **HB** _____

SHORT TITLE Code Talker Museum & Visitors Center **SB** 245/aSIAC

ANALYST Geisler

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY14	FY15		
	\$1,000.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

Cultural Affairs Department (DCA)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SIAC Amendment

The Senate Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee amendment to Senate Bill 245 increases the appropriation from \$200.0 thousand dollars to \$1 million dollars.

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Bill 245 appropriates \$200.0 thousand dollars to the Indian Affairs Department for the purpose of conducting a feasibility and market study regarding visitors and traffic at a national Navajo code talkers museum and veterans center located in McKinley County.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Any remaining balance of the \$1million general fund appropriation would revert at the end of fiscal year. The feasibility and market study would likely address potential visitors to the museum and veterans center in McKinley County as well as economic impact to the area.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

IAD notes that Senate Bill 245 would have the Indian Affairs Department do a feasibility study on creation of a similar museum in McKinley County to honor the New Mexico veterans who served as code talkers. The Navajo Code Talkers Association is working on building the Museum/Center to honor all veterans that served to protect freedom and the American way of life. The purpose of this project is to: honor those who used the secret Navajo Code that contributed significantly to winning the war in the Pacific and forever change the course of American history; those who served but never came home; and all those that used their native language to help make a difference in all battles fought to preserve our freedom.

Currently there is a National Navajo Code Talkers Museum and Veterans Center located in Tuba City, Arizona, approximately 3 to 4 hours west of Gallup. For a New Mexico museum, the proponents envision the creation of a unique experience reflective of the history and significance of the Navajo Code Talker legacy and significant role in the outcome of World War II.

The National Museum is dedicated to providing historical clarity, accuracy and context in preserving the extraordinary contribution of the Navajo Code Talkers for future generations. The Code Talkers story will be told in exciting detail through an engaged learning environment, powerful interactive exhibits and activities, living documents of the Navajo code and culture in the larger perspective of modern history. The Museum and integrated education programs will serve as the national repository for the once-secret military voice code and the legendary skill, endurance, courage and ingenuity of the Navajo Code Talkers.

The Navajo Code Talkers Association President reported the proposed National Navajo Code Talkers Museum and Veterans Center for New Mexico will be located in McKinley County just east of Tse Bonito, New Mexico.

The requested appropriations will be used primarily for start-up costs - planning, design, and site preparations. The state-of-the-art Veterans Center will provide integrated services, resources, and opportunities for all veterans, active duty personnel, and their families. There is no such place in New Mexico for Native veterans to honor and celebrate the courageous deeds of all warriors. Several dozen of the 400 plus Navajo Code Talkers were from New Mexico.

DCA notes that it operates the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture (MIAC) in Santa Fe and does not see a conflict of the creation of a code talker museum. MIAC provides minimal interpretation on Indian people as soldiers or veterans, yet does have some relevant items in its collections. MIAC does not actively collect in the area of 20th century Native American military history. The WWII era is a very important one in 20th century Native American history, as it marked the beginning of large-scale relocation of Indian people to urban areas off the reservation. The code talker story is a significant one for Navajo people, as well as Indian people in general, since it emphasizes the importance of traditional values, such as maintaining a traditional language, and warrior honor and strength. A feasibility study, such as the one proposed by this bill, should include consideration of issues such as whether or not this museum would duplicate existing resources.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

IAD notes that absent this museum and veterans center the heritage of New Mexico code talkers

may be lost and the opportunities to provide services and resources for all veterans and their families will not exist.

GG/svb