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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>Jaramillo</u>	LAST UPDATED <u>2/7/24</u> ORIGINAL DATE <u>1/24/24</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Local Firefighter Recruitment</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>Senate Bill 21/aSFC</u>
ANALYST <u>Hilla</u>	

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY24	FY25	FY26	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
DFA		\$139.5	\$139.5	\$279.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Duplicates General Appropriation Act. Duplicates House Bill 88.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From

Department of Finance and Administration (DFA)

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SFC Amendment to Senate Bill 21

The Senate Finance Committee amendment to Senate Bill 21 removes the \$35 million appropriation.

Synopsis of Original Senate Bill 21

Senate Bill 21 creates a program within the Department of Finance and Administration to distribute funds for statewide and local firefighter recruitment. The department shall establish criteria for the distribution of funds to state and local fire departments and includes volunteer firefighters who are certified and have taken the oath prescribed for firefighters and for licensed emergency medical technicians. The bill appropriates \$35 million from the general fund to the agency in FY25 through FY27, with unexpended balances reverting to the general fund in FY27.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns, or May 15, 2024, if enacted.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

DFA says, “In combination with the law enforcement funding appropriated to LGD during the

last two legislative sessions, the proposed correction officer recruitment fund and this firefighter recruitment fund, an FTE is requested to develop application criteria, and administer grant awards, distribution of funds, and reporting processes. The total cost for DFA to establish an FTE to manage these funds is \$139,512 which includes salary, benefits, and equipment.”

EMNRD says that if wildlife fires are suppressed while small, the state will spend less to manage the wildfire and protect lives and property.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The bill as originally drafted, with a \$35 million appropriation, duplicates a special requested by the Department of Finance and Administration for FY25 for \$35 million for the firefighter recruitment fund. The special is included in House Bill 2. This bill also duplicates House Bill 88.

This bill also relates to the fire protection grant fund outlined in Section 59A-53-18 NMSA 1978.

The Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) states that New Mexico has over 300 fire departments with over half of them operated by volunteers. With a decline in staffing levels of both permanent firefighters and volunteers, this fund would help convert the volunteer positions to full time positions, helping establish fire departments in rural areas, reducing the need for volunteers. DFA states that increasing the number of certified firefighters and licensed EMS would reduce emergency response times and expand public safety services in rural areas.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department says that their Forestry Division will improve if this bill is enacted. This division is responsible for wildland fire suppression and response, which is assisted by local fire departments. The wildland fire response is authorized under Joint Powers Agreements and coordinated through resource mobilization plans. The bill will improve the capacity of local fire departments to develop wildland fire qualifications, according to EMNRD.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

For administrative implications, DFA says, “In combination with the Law Enforcement Funding appropriated to LGD during the last two legislative sessions, the proposed Correction Officer Recruitment Fund and this Firefighter Recruitment Fund, an FTE is requested to develop application criteria, and administer grant awards, distribution of funds, and reporting processes. The total cost for DFA to establish an FTE to manage these funds is \$139,512 which includes salary, benefits, and equipment.”

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Senate Bill 21 as originally drafted, with a \$35 million appropriation, duplicates a DFA special request for FY25 for \$35 million for the firefighter recruitment fund and House Bill 88.