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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Montoya/Townsend/Pettigrew LAST UPDATED _____
ORIGINAL DATE 2/2/2023
BILL
SHORT TITLE Regional Legislative Staff NUMBER House Bill 283
ANALYST Leger

APPROPRIATION* (dollars in thousands)

FY24	FY25	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$6,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Duplicates appropriation in the General Appropriation Act of 2024

Sources of Information

LFC Files

SUMMARY

Synopsis of House Bill 283

House Bill 283 (HB283) enacts a new section in Chapter 2, the Legislative Branch, to provide Legislative Council with oversight of year-round nonpartisan administrative assistance and policy support for legislators and appropriates \$6 million from the general fund to Legislative Council Service (LCS) for this purpose.

LCS will be responsible for hiring no more than 30 support personnel, purchasing information technology equipment and software, furniture, supplies, office space and other necessary support.

The administrative assistance and policy support staff will be housed at one of 12 regional offices established by LCS. A legislator may participate in the interview and selection process and utilize staff an average of 10 hours per week.

Legislative support personnel shall perform nonpartisan administrative and policy support duties at the direction of legislators to whom the personnel are assigned but cannot initiate, plan or participate in community engagement or partisan activities.

The 30 nonpartisan full-time-equivalent employees will report to the LCS director or designee.

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

The appropriation of \$6 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.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The definition of nonpartisan staff according to the National Council of State Legislature (NCSL) is legislative staff that serve members of all political parties in the legislature or in a chamber.

Laws 2022, 3rd Special Session, Chapter 3 appropriated \$100 thousand to UNM bureau of business and economic research (BBER) to conduct and report a survey of legislative personnel on the needs of the Legislature and a survey of the Legislature to identify activities and time devoted to legislative duties outside of the session and study the costs and benefits of legislator compensation, modifying the length and scope of legislative sessions, and legislative staffing.

In February 2023, the BBER report indicated 93.6 percent of legislators surveyed said staff could provide additional services for members. Legislative staff functions range from primary research and analysis to event and meeting coordination to building maintenance. Legislators describe the need for additional staff, specifically individual professional staff, to assist with the day-to-day needs of being a public servant and helping the legislators fulfill their constitutionally mandated responsibilities to ensuring that the Legislature remains a coequal branch of the government.

In September 2023, the LFC convened a legislative modernization subcommittee and received presentations on the BBER report and legislative staff and staffing structures by NCSL.

Laws 2023, Chapter 1 appropriated \$2.5 million to hire a consulting entity to consider the feasibility of and make recommendations on the logistics and resources needed for district offices and operations for the legislature. In October 2023, a report conducted by The Focus Group, Research and Polling, Architectural Research Consultants, and NCSL presented three potential staffing models. The regional model is estimated to have an annual cost of \$4.1 million to support 30 FTE, 12 regional offices, and non-partisan staff to provide administrative and policy support.

RELATIONSHIP

This bill duplicates an appropriation in the General Appropriation Act of 2024 for \$6 million from the general fund to provide legislative district staff, including salaries and benefits, information technology equipment and software, furniture, supplies, office space and other necessary support, provided the legislative council shall adopt staffing patterns, policies, procedures and other guidelines for the staff and adopt administrative support guidelines for legislative council service.