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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Martinez DATE TYPED: 2/25/03 HB 595

SHORT TITLE: Thoreau Uranium Workers Office SB

ANALYST: Dunbar

APPROPRIATION

| Appropriation Contained | | Estimated Additional Impact | | Recurring or Non-Rec | Fund Affected |
|-------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|------|-------------------------|------------------|
| FY03 | FY04 | FY03 | FY04 | | |
| | \$80.0 | | | Recurring | GF |
| | | | | | |

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)
Health Policy Commission (HPC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 595 appropriates \$80,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Health (DOH) for expenditure in fiscal year 2004 to establish a uranium workers' office in Thoreau. This office would provide services to individuals who have been negatively affected by uranium mining.

Significant Issues

A clearer definition of required services may be necessary. The proposed appropriation may be inadequate to meet the needs.

Issues confronting miners, their families and communities are vast and complicated. DOH suggests that a more effective approach could be for DOH to conduct a study of the entire scope of issues relating to uranium mining in NM. This study could bring together representatives of the Navajo Nation, federal agencies, state and local government agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental agencies with an interest and expertise in this issue, as well as those directly impacted.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$80.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY 04 shall revert to the general fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The operation of an office such as that proposed in HB 595 is not within the current technical expertise of the Department of Health. Establishment of an effective service office would best be done under contract. Administrative resources would be required to create a Request for Proposals, conduct an appropriate application review, and execute and manage a contract. This may be possible within existing capacity.

The \$80,000 may be an adequate amount to support staff that could meet with individuals at risk and provide appropriate information, referral and counseling, but is it an inadequate amount of money to provide significant levels of clinical services to those affected by uranium mining. A uranium workers office could be based in the primary care clinic or other community facilities already established in Thoreau.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

It is likely that HB 595 is intended to address the needs of the post-1971 cohort of miners who have inadequate access to specialized services they need. Although many of these miners have insurance coverage or access to Indian Health Service resources, local care systems do not always have the expertise to deal with the complexities of uranium exposure. Moreover, the legal, social work, and counseling needs of these individuals may not be met. While other uranium miners have received special Federal compensation, the post-1971 cohort is not eligible.

HB 595 does not clearly state what types of services the proposed uranium workers' office are expected to provide. Similarly, it does not clearly identify whether the target group for the proposed services is all individuals affected by the uranium mining or just uranium workers. If residents of the region affected by water contamination and mine tailings are to be targeted, a different response may be required.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Would the sponsor consider a memorial to direct a study of the issues impacting uranium workers to determine the need? An appropriate budget tied to the plan could be projected, forming the basis for a subsequent appropriation.

BD/sb