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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/08/06

SPONSOR Harrison LAST UPDATED _____ HB 783

EASTERN NAVAJO CHAPTER VETERANS'

SHORT TITLE SERVICES SB _____

ANALYST Weber

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$3,315.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SB 616

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Veterans Services Department
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 783 appropriates \$3.315 million from the general fund to the Indian Affairs Department for the purpose of providing Veterans' services in Crownpoint and other eastern Navajo chapters of the Navajo Nation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$3.315 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY07 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Indian Affairs Department reports:

The Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs (DNVA) operates five agency offices, including one in the Eastern Navajo Agency which serves the Navajo Chapters in New Mexico. There are approximately 1,901 veterans in the Eastern Navajo Agency.

According to DNVA, there is currently a need for housing for over 650 Navajo veterans residing in New Mexico. The unemployment rate of Navajo veterans is at least 60% and approximately 10% of Navajo veterans are requesting housing assistance. Many of these veterans are homeless, elderly, handicap/disabled, or are otherwise on a fixed income and do not have the means to finance a home.

Additionally, Navajo veterans need medical and health care, benefits and financial support, transportation, education and employment, and training. The appropriation request would assist Navajo veterans living in the Eastern Navajo Agency to access those government benefits to which they are entitled. The funding may help fund veterans' service Officer positions. Such Officers assist veterans to process compensation and pension applications, file appeals, request military service records, etc. Navajo veterans would benefit by learning how to navigate through a cumbersome system which requires a lot of paperwork. Ultimately, this proposal would help improve the quality of life of Navajo veterans in the Crownpoint and other Eastern Navajo Chapters.

The Veterans' Services Department adds:

The Department of Veteran Services has two Veteran Service Officers that serve the Navajo Nation, one in Gallup, and one in Farmington. The Department of Veteran Services has initiated a Native American Veteran Outreach Program that was funded during the 47th Legislative Session, 2005. The DVS has made contacts in each pueblo, the two Apache Tribes as well as the Navajo Nation. This program will serve as a clearing house for training and information for Native American Veterans in New Mexico.

MW/yr