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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/27/07

SPONSOR Harrison LAST UPDATED _____ HB HM 27

SHORT TITLE Change Columbus Day to Indigenous Day SB _____

ANALYST Hanika Ortiz

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Memorial 27 offers reasons for “indigenous day” to be celebrated rather than Columbus Day in New Mexico.

The memorial provides for the following:

- Christopher Columbus did not discover America, as the native peoples of the United States are well aware.
- Over twenty tribes call New Mexico home.
- An estimated one hundred ninety-six thousand six hundred ninety-five indigenous people live in New Mexico.
- Indigenous people view Columbus Day as a celebration of conquest and genocide.
- The indigenous people of New Mexico have as yet no state recognition of their contributions, New Mexicans should proudly celebrate "indigenous day" rather than Columbus day in order to mark a time to celebrate accomplishments and contributions rather than a time to mourn the losses caused by Columbus.

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- The state of South Dakota changed the celebration of Columbus day to Native American day eighteen years ago, thus paying tribute to the indigenous people who still thrive there today.
- Approximately twenty states and territories do not recognize or celebrate Columbus day.
- The United States Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico celebrate their joint friendship day in stead of Columbus day because of the atrocities committed in the Caribbean by Columbus and his crew.
- New Mexico should stop legitimizing the actions of Columbus and stop perpetuating a historical fiction that Columbus "discovered" the United States.

The memorial further resolves that "indigenous day" be used to celebrate New Mexico's cultural diversity and its multiculturalism; and that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the secretary of higher education, the secretary of public education and the leadership of every Indian tribe, nation or pueblo in New Mexico.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Columbus' voyages across the Atlantic Ocean began a European effort at exploration and colonization of the Western Hemisphere. While history places great significance on his first voyage of 1492, he did not actually reach the mainland until his third voyage in 1498. Likewise, he was not the earliest European explorer to reach the Americas, as there are accounts of European transatlantic contact prior to 1492.

PED reports that the significance of early European explorations to the changes made in the world during the 15th Century and our broader and more enlightened understanding of events by today's standards call for a broader understanding of the celebration. Doing so might be an opportunity for New Mexicans to strengthen their knowledge and understanding and correct misunderstandings about history. It will allow New Mexicans to celebrate a more universal recognition of accomplishments since the period of exploration that is symbolized by Columbus.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

President Roosevelt set aside Columbus Day as a day marking Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the Americas in 1492. Since 1971, the holiday has been commemorated in the U.S. on the second Monday in October. However, it is generally only observed today by banks, the Post Office, and most governments and schools. Most businesses remain open on full schedules.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Some people oppose Columbus Day, claiming his achievements are not worthy of a holiday. In recent years, the holiday has been rejected by some people who view it as a celebration of conquest and genocide by the Spaniards. In its place, Indigenous Peoples Day is sometimes celebrated. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, "Puerto Rico-Virgin Islands Friendship Day" is celebrated on the same day as Columbus Day, due to the controversy surrounding the atrocities committed against the indigenous peoples of the present-day Caribbean during the Spanish colonization of the New World. In the state of South Dakota, the day is officially a state holiday known as "Native American Day", not Columbus Day.

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Some have argued that the responsibility of contemporary governments and their citizens for allegedly ongoing acts of genocide against Native Americans are masked by positive Columbus myths and celebrations. These critics argue that a particular understanding of the legacy of Columbus has been used to legitimize their actions, and it is this misuse of history that must be exposed.

AHO/csd