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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/22/2007

SPONSOR Cravens LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Office of the State Medical Investigator SB 95

ANALYST McOlash

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	\$655.5	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to the annual appropriation to UNM in the General Appropriation Act for the recurring operations of the OMI.

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 95 appropriates \$655,460 from the General Fund to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico for expenditure in FY 2008 for the Office of the Medical Investigator.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$655,460 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the General Fund... Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY 2008 shall revert to the General Fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) reports experiencing severe increases in operating expenses and caseload, and significant productivity declines due to staff shortages, increased documentation requirements, and aged, obsolete equipment. Further, delays in the provision of toxicology results from the State Laboratory Division (SLD) are seriously impacting the OMI investigative processes, and families across the state are suffering a variety of financial hardships due to the very late issuance of death certificates needed to settle insurance claims and to access savings accounts.

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The forensic examination caseload at the Office of the Medical Investigator has increased by approximately 21 percent over the past five years. At the same time, due to law enforcement compliance and litigation, the amount of time required for each examination has increased by 40 percent. The national standard for autopsy caseload is 250 autopsies per pathologist annually. The New Mexico OMI pathologists have been averaging close to 500 autopsies per year. The funding proposed in this legislation would enable OMI to hire additional personnel to better handle the caseload.

The proposal for \$655,500 additional appropriation for FY08 was submitted to the New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED) by UNM Health Sciences Center, but is not included in the HED's funding recommendation for FY08.

BM/mt