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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/13/15

SPONSOR Brown LAST UPDATED _____ HJM 11

SHORT TITLE Videoconference Interim Committee Meetings SB _____

ANALYST Leger

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY14	FY15	FY16	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total			Indeterminate	Indeterminate		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to House Bill 1

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files
National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Joint Memorial

House Joint Memorial 11 requests the New Mexico Legislative Council to allow interim committee members to participate in meetings by real-time videoconference when practicable.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The fiscal impact and estimated additional operating budget impact is indeterminate.

HJM 11 identifies videoconferencing as an option for Legislators to participate in interim committee meetings held at the state capitol or other locations at which acceptable video conference capability is readily available. Most committee rooms in the capitol are only equipped for webcasting; therefore measures would have to be taken to ensure these same committee rooms have the appropriate infrastructure, licensing, and equipment, including staff training and user rules for videoconferencing.

During the interim, committees routinely meet outside of Santa Fe to see and hear firsthand the issues facing New Mexico. While traveling the state, the number of facilities with videoconference capabilities in New Mexico may be limited to institutions of higher education. As of September 2014, there are 30 legislative interim committees.

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The memorial states members who participate in meetings by videoconference be prohibited from receiving per diem and mileage for that specific meeting. Costs savings specifically for per diem and mileage could be recognized. However, IT costs may be negatively impacted in the early stages of implementation.

According to information provided NCSL, the states of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nevada developed remote audio conference sites in selects parts of their states. Cost estimates for the remote sites ranged from \$25-145 thousand. Theses remote sites can also be accessed by Legislators and the general public. Costs associated with audio conferencing from the remote sites was charged to the respective legislative committee with prior approval by the chairman.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

HJM 11 states the following:

- The Legislature’s work is increasingly complex and cannot be contained within the confines of sixty- and thirty-day sessions each January through March;
- To help close the potential knowledge gap presented by a part-time, citizen legislature, the legislature relies on interim committees to provide both education and thoughtful policy development on a range of topics;
- It is difficult for many citizen legislators to take time off work or rearrange their schedules to attend interim committee meetings as often as they would like;
- The travel time to and from interim meetings increases the burden on citizen legislators;
- Advancements in technology have reached the point that members could participate in meetings remotely; and
- Several other state legislatures have developed audio conferencing and videoconferencing capabilities for their members.
- Finally the memorial states that Legislative Council be requested to prohibit members who participate in a meeting by videoconference from receiving per diem and mileage for participating in that meeting.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Although technology continues to advance, at times technology fails, for example if internet connections go down this can cause a disruption for the member, the committee, presenters, and meeting attendees. NCSL reports the state of Oregon has utilized Skype and MS Lync for web conferencing, the quality is greatly dependent on internet connection speed. The state of Montana has used Skype and Facetime; advantages are ease of use, access, reduced travel expense whereas the disadvantages are security concerns, tech support, and network bandwidth. The State of Oregon has reported that utilizing more professional equipment often brings more professional participation. They require the users on both ends of the audio conference to use headsets with microphones to reduce background noise and other feedback.

RELATIONSHIP

House Bill 1, the feed bill, that funds the legislative agencies.

ALTERNATIVES

As an alternative, with over 30 interim committees to choose from, a select number of committees can be identified for a videoconferencing pilot project. A pilot project will identify benefits, costs, etc. on a small scale.

JLL/bb