LFC Requester:	

AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS - 2026 REGULAR SESSION

WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, UPLOAD ANALYSIS TO
AgencyAnalysis.nmlegis.gov and email to **billanalysis@dfa.nm.gov**
(Analysis must be uploaded as a PDF)

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}

Date Prepared: *1/22/2026* *Check all that apply:*
Bill Number: *SB0044* Original *X* Correction __
Amendment __ Substitute __

Sponsor: Craig W. Brandt

Agency Name and Code Number: New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology 962

Person Writing fsdfs Analysis: The VPAF Office

Short Title: NM TECH BOARD MONITORING NETWORK

Phone: 575-835-5606 **Email:** VPAF@nmt.edu

SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	**FY28**		
$2,000.0		Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) indicate expenditure decreases)

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	**FY28**	**FY29**		

(Parenthesis ( ) indicate revenue decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY27	FY28	FY29	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total						

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:
Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis:

- Making an appropriation to the Board of Regents of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology for seismology equipment and the expansion of monitoring network capabilities in the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Research of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, in partnership with the Oil Conservation Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

- This bill would provide a one-time appropriation of $2 million to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR), a research division of New Mexico Tech, to be expended in FY27, to improve and operate a state-wide seismic network with regional areas of higher-density instrumentation in the Permian basin and around the Socorro Magma Body.
- In FY26, the NMBGMR works to upgrade and expand two existing regional seismic networks and establish a new state-wide network to monitor seismicity in the state. The NMBGMR is currently upgrading the seismic network from 17 stations to 43 permanent stations.
- This bill will help facilitate the staffing levels required to operate and maintain a new state-wide seismic network and report seismic events around the state, with a particular emphasis on the Permian basin and Socorro region. Funding is also needed to facilitate periodic repairs to the network and telemetry of seismic data to New Mexico Tech.
- The agency identifies an annual need of $500,000 per year to continue improvements and monitoring activity of the seismic network. This annual funding need represents a long-term commitment to sustaining the state-wide seismic network once the initial equipment and expansion phase is complete.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES
Not expected.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS
Not expected.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS
Not expected.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP
Companion Bill to HB48.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Earthquakes occur naturally throughout New Mexico due to tectonic forces that cause faults to slip and release stored energy. Additionally, induced seismicity has occurred in recent years in some areas with oil and gas extraction and wastewater disposal. It is essential to record and monitor seismicity to better understand the causes and origins of earthquakes and seismic hazard risk in New Mexico.
- New Mexico Tech Seismological Observatory (NMTSO) has been monitoring seismic activity in New Mexico since the 1960s and currently maintains a permanent seismic network in southeast New Mexico and around the Socorro Magma Body in central New Mexico. The observatory produces publicly available, detailed earthquake catalogs, which are widely used by researchers, regulatory agencies, and the general public.
- The Socorro Magma Body (SMB) remains one of the state's most active regions for naturally occurring seismicity. The SMB lies at the southern end of the Albuquerque basin, part of the Rio Grande rift.
- The Permian Basin in southeastern New Mexico has experienced a notable increase in seismicity over the past decade, largely associated with oil and gas development activities rather than natural tectonic processes. Historically, the region was characterized by low background seismicity, but the expansion of wastewater disposal has altered subsurface stress conditions, reactivating pre-existing faults within the Delaware Basin and adjacent structural features. Most earthquakes are small, but several events of magnitude 4 and greater have occurred, drawing increased attention from regulators, industry, and communities.
- New Mexico has implemented a suite of regulatory measures aimed at mitigating induced seismicity tied to oil and gas wastewater injection, primarily overseen by the Oil Conservation Division (OCD) of the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department. Under its **Seismicity Response Protocol**, the state can designate **Seismic Response Areas (SRAs)** when seismic events of magnitude 2.5 or greater occur near injection wells; within these areas, operators must increase seismic monitoring, report weekly injection volumes and pressure, and adjust or reduce injection rates based on both earthquake magnitude and proximity to seismic activity—with larger quakes triggering more substantial reductions or even shut-ins for nearby wells.
- The OCD needs a robust, publicly available seismic network and seismic catalog to effectively regulate oil and gas disposal operations for the safety of local communities and industry operators in the region. Beyond the NMTSO, the USGS is the only other public entity monitoring seismicity in the state. The USGS seismic network in the Permian basin was deployed as a temporary network and may not be available if federal funding for the

program is reduced or eliminated.
- Industry representatives have expressed their support of the NMTSO and efforts to improve the seismic network to provide a robust, independent, and reliable record of seismic activity in the Permian basin and across the state.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

ALTERNATIVES

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

- Without adequate funding, the staff levels required to support a modern, state-wide seismic network will be insufficient to fulfil the goal of providing the state with a robust seismic catalog of events. This will impair the state's ability to regulate the injection of wastewater from oil and gas operations to mitigate seismic hazards and may impact future state revenue from oil and gas leases. Naturally occurring seismicity still poses a hazard to communities in the state; improving statewide seismic monitoring will help New Mexicans better understand the seismic risk.

AMENDMENTS

NM Tech recommends revising the language in the Section 1 to align the appropriation amount with current project scaling and provide a multi-year period (through FY29) to complete the installation and staffing of permanent stations:

APPROPRIATION.--*One million, five hundred thousand dollars ($1,500,000)* is appropriated *in fiscal year 2027* from the general fund to the board of regents of the New Mexico institute of mining and technology for expenditure in fiscal years 2027 *through 2029* for seismology equipment and to expand monitoring network capabilities in the bureau of geology and mineral resources of the New Mexico institute of mining and technology, in partnership with the oil conservation division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department. Any unexpended balance remaining at the end of fiscal year *2029* shall revert to the general fund.