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### FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR:	Kissner	DATE TYPED:	02/13/00	HB	342
SHORT TITLE:	Qualifications for State Police Officers			SB	
				ANALYST:	Trujillo

### APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY00	FY01	FY00	FY01		
	\$		\$ 1,600.0	Recurring	GF

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to General Appropriations Act

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Corrections Department

Department of Public Safety

Crime Victims Reparation Commission

## **SUMMARY**

### Synopsis of Bill

HB342 amends Section 29-2-6 NMSA 1978 to revise the education qualifications for new State Police officers. It allows members of the New Mexico State Police, at the time of their appointment, to have completed thirty (30) hours of college credit, and to complete no less than an additional thirty (30) hours of college credit within two years after appointment.

### Significant Issues

HB342 changes sixty (60) hours of college credit upon appointment, to complete thirty (30) hours of college credit upon appointment, with an additional number of college credit hours to total no less than sixty (60) college credit hours within two (2) years of appointment.

## **FISCAL IMPLICATION**

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) reports there may be significant fiscal impact on the State Police Division if the division is required to pay for the employee's additional college hours. The department's current tuition reimbursement policy states that if any employee is directed by a supervisor to attend a course, or a course is part of an employee's certification or job requirement, then the division for which the employee works must pay.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

DPS reports the administrative implications are minimal.

## **CONFLICT/DUPLICATION/COMPANIONSHIP/RELATIONSHIP**

DPS reports HB432 could have a great impact on the number of applicants available for recruiting. A number of applicants have some college credits, but not enough to enter the recruit school. This would also allow recruiting officers to recruit applicants with no college credits, and give them a chance to continue.

## **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

In the Program Issues of the *State of New Mexico Report of the Legislative Finance Committee to the Forty-Fourth Legislature Second Session* LFC staff reports:

**Additional State Police Officers.** During the 1997 interim, there was significant discussion by the legislature of the increased need for 24-hour patrol and the inadequacy of the then 435 officer force. Laws 1998, Chapter 4 appropriated \$8.6 million from the general fund to the DPS for the purpose of recruiting, employing, training and equipping additional state police officers. Of the \$8.6 million, \$2.8 million was for recruiting, employing, training and equipping 50 additional state police officers in FY99, and \$5.8 million was for equipping 40 additional state police officers during fiscal years 2000 through 2002. The General Appropriation Act of 1999 appropriated \$2.2 million for an additional 40 state police officers in FY00. This appropriation was to increase the force from 485 to 525 commissioned officers by June 30, 2000 [*this date has since changed to December 31, 2000*], and to 605 officers by June 30, 2002. As of September 30, 1999, DPS's actual police force totaled 465.

The current state police recruit school, which had an initial enrollment of 33 recruits, graduated 20 cadets in October 1999. The agency is planning a second recruit school in the spring. With attrition and retirement, the LFC estimates the force size on June 30, 2000 will be approximately 490, a force complement well below the 525 commissioned officers for which the legislature appropriated sufficient funding.

The department contends the projected funding provided by the legislation addresses many needs within the state police. DPS requested an additional \$4.0 million to fund the projected salaries and recurring costs for

40 additional state police officers in FY01.

**Recruitment.** DPS must carefully evaluate the effectiveness of existing recruitment procedures and requirements. Current practices are not adequate to provide the necessary pool of qualified candidates to fill vacant positions in a reasonable and responsible manner.

Only about 55 percent of the recruits who attend the State Police Law Enforcement Academy graduate. Because the current recruitment requirements and practices do not produce an adequate pool of candidates, and graduation rates are low given current practices, vacant positions will not be filled in a timely basis unless significant changes are made in current management operations.

The committee recommends DPS examine alternatives to enhance its recruitment practices. Such alternatives should consider allowing local law enforcement officers that have graduated from a law enforcement academy, and have practical field experience, to be hired without requiring an additional 16 weeks of training which is a prerequisite for new state police officers. Other reciprocity arrangements should also be evaluated with the goal of creating a qualified pool of candidates to fill authorized positions.

The General Appropriations Act vetoed by the Governor included \$2.5 million in general fund operating reserve to fund up to 40 additional commissioned state police officers, for new vehicles, maintenance of vehicles and overtime costs. The Chief of the New Mexico State Police has indicated that there is difficulty in the recruitment of officers and the contingency placed on the State Police Division to reach an FTE complement of 525 commissioned officers may be unattainable. HB 342 may help to alleviate the recruitment problem currently in existence.

LAT/gm