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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

	ORIGINAL DATE 2/01/06		
SPONSOR	Pinto	LAST UPDATED	HB
	RADIATION EXPOSURE VICTIMS'		
SHORT TITLE	BENEFITS	SB	375
		ANALYST	Weber

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$150.0	Recurring	General

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 375 appropriates \$150 thousand from the general fund to Indian Affairs Department for the purpose of providing case management services to victims of radiation exposure or their surviving families located in New Mexico so that they may access benefits due to them pursuant to the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$150.0 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY07 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Indian Affairs Department contributes.

The need for compensation resulting from the effects of uranium mining operations in northwestern New Mexico has long been established with the enactment of RECA. Since

RECA's enactment and subsequent amendments, however, the needs of the large number of eligible recipients remain unmet.

The Office of Navajo Uranium Workers reports that for the Navajo Nation overall, only 700 of 7,000 potentially eligible Navajo claimants have received some type of compensation in the past 14 years. And, only 4,000 of these claimants are successfully registered. Approximately 6,000 claims are not currently filed. For Navajo claimants in New Mexico, there are 2,000 that have successfully registered and approximately 1,500 claims that have not been filed. A large reason for these high numbers of unprocessed claims is the lack of adequate staff to process the Navajo claims. Currently, there are only three caseworkers (1 FTE and 2 TEMP) that process the more than 5,000 Navajo claims that have been submitted to their office.

According to the Office of Navajo Uranium Workers, there remains a dire need for case management services for the Navajo claimants and their families. Specifically, there is a need for a sub-office in Crownpoint or Gallup to serve the NM's Eastern Navajo community members.

MW/mt