

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 199

49th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2010

Tracking Number: .181150.1

Short Title: New Mexico-Grown Produce for School Lunches

Sponsor(s): Senator Pete Campos

Analyst: James Ball

Date: January 31, 2010

Bill Summary:

SB 199 makes an appropriation to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) to purchase New Mexico-grown fresh fruits and vegetables and to administer a program ensuring that this produce is delivered to school lunch programs statewide.

Fiscal Impact:

\$1,440,000 is appropriated to the Board of Regents at New Mexico State University (NMSU) for FY 11 and subsequent fiscal years.

Unexpended or unencumbered funds do not revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

The analysis of SB 199 by the Higher Education Department (HED) states that this request was not submitted by NMSU to the department for review.

According to the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) Fiscal Impact Report (FIR) of a similar bill introduced in 2009, the LFC has concerns about the growth of research and public service projects within the higher education budget, as well as the alignment of these projects with state goals and strategic plans. The committee also continues to have significant concerns about accountability and performance outcomes for such projects.

Substantive Issues:

According to HED, the objectives of the program, known as Farm to School, are to serve K-12 school lunch programs and local farms by:

- serving healthy meals in school cafeterias;
- improving student nutrition;
- providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities; and
- supporting local and regional farmers.

Background:

According to NMDA's analysis of a similar bill introduced in 2009:

- New Mexico growers and shippers of fresh fruits and vegetables began supplying produce to one school district in 2001. By 2008 they supplied eight school districts with sales of approximately \$350,000.
- New Mexico producers are selling melons, apples, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, peaches, pears, and salad greens seasonally. While some producers are able to sell products only from June to October, NMDA has seen a growth in sales into March and beyond due to improved storage and season extension techniques being utilized to meet school market demand.
- Most public and private schools in New Mexico require or will require good agricultural practices (GAP) certification for suppliers of fruits, vegetables, and food products. NMDA and NMSU offer GAP certification training to producers in the state.
- A 2007 study done by the NMDA, “Farm to Table” (a New Mexico nonprofit entity), and the Congressional Hunger Center surveyed 682 New Mexico farmers. Sixty-four percent of farmers who returned the survey indicated they would be interested in selling to local schools and institutions. Surveys also were sent to 175 food service directors in the state representing most of New Mexico’s public, private, charter, and Bureau of Indian Education schools. Fifty of the 60 respondents indicated that they would purchase from New Mexico farmers.

According to the Public Education Department (PED), SB 199 supports the United States Department of Agriculture’s guidelines for schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program. PED and NMDA currently collaborate on the Farm to Schools and Farm to Table programs. Currently, in New Mexico there are a dozen school districts that are purchasing New Mexico grown fruits and vegetables, when available, serving over 180,000 students.

Finally, the Department of Health (DOH) states in its analysis of SB 199 that increased fresh fruit and vegetable intake is a key DOH program strategy to prevent chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, some cancers, obesity, and osteoporosis. The leading causes of preventable disease and death are tobacco use, lack of adequate physical activity, and poor nutritional practices. Lack of physical activity and poor nutritional habits are believed to be the biggest contributors to overweight and obesity. DOH points out that SB 199 would enable schools to utilize New Mexico-grown produce and serve more fresh fruits and vegetables to school-aged children, while supporting the economic development of local farmers.

DOH also notes that SB 199 is supported by the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council and is in alignment with the school nutrition requirements passed during previous legislative sessions, which require that foods sold in schools meet certain health requirements.

Related Bills:

None as of 1-31-2010