



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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SPECIAL PLATES FOR VETS, NAT'L GUARD

House Bills 4170-4173 (Substitutes (H-1))
First Analysis (3-1-89)

RECEIVED

Sponsor: Rep. Robert DeMars
Committee: Military & Veterans' Affairs

MAY 23 1989

Mich. State Law Library

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Since 1982, Michigan has honored U.S. veterans who are former prisoners of war by allowing them to obtain specially inscribed license plates. This past summer, Public Acts 148 and 150 made specially inscribed plates available to veterans of World War I, recipients of the purple heart, and survivors of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It has now been proposed that special plates be made available to veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and to current and former members of the National Guard.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:

House Bills 4170 through 4173 would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to provide for specially inscribed license plates for certain veterans and national guard members. In each case, the special plate would cost \$5 in addition to the regular registration fee, and provision would be made for handicappers to be issued handicapper stickers. Each bill would take effect November 11, 1989.

House Bill 4170 would allow World War II veterans to obtain a registration plate inscribed with special identification numbers preceded by the letters "WWII," and with "World War II Veteran" underneath.

MCL 257.803h

House Bill 4171 would allow Korean War veterans to obtain a registration plate inscribed with special identification numbers and with "Korean War Veteran" underneath.

MCL 257.803j

House Bill 4172 would allow Vietnam War veterans to obtain a registration plate inscribed with special identification numbers and with "Vietnam War Veteran" underneath.

MCL 257.803k

House Bill 4173 would allow former and present members of the National Guard to obtain a registration plate inscribed with special identification numbers and with "National Guard Member" underneath.

MCL 257.803i

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Department of State, numbers of registrations under the bills potentially could number well over a million; per-plate costs to the state are anticipated to be \$6 or \$7, rather than the \$5 provided by the bills. (12-2-88)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bills would give war veterans and National Guard members the same honor and recognition that the state now gives former prisoners of war, Pearl Harbor survivors,

purple heart recipients, and World War I veterans. The specially inscribed license plates proposed by the bills could do more than serve as a means of honoring the individual and reminding the public of the services rendered and hardships endured by that person: such plates also enable veterans to strike up acquaintances with each other and enjoy the satisfaction and camaraderie that comes from shared experience.

Against:

While it is appropriate to respect and honor veterans and their various sacrifices, it is not appropriate to testify to this respect by amending the law to provide for special license plates for every group of veterans that falls into a special category. One can contrive to create many special categories of veterans and other people, all deserving of honor; the creation of more and more special license plates are not a suitable method of expressing this honor.

Against:

The bills would enable a veteran who had never served in a combat zone to obtain and display license plates that strongly imply the individual had risked his or her life in war. Instead of authorizing the plates for people who were in the armed services "during" a war, perhaps the bills should limit the plates to those who served "in" a war.

Against:

The bills tend to trivialize veterans' issues, and divert attention from more important matters, such as funding for veterans' hospitals.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Military Affairs supports the bills. (12-5-88)

The Disabled American Veterans supports the bills. (12-5-88)

The Commanders Group does not support the bills. (12-1-88)

The Department of State has no position on the bills. (2-22-89)

The Department of Transportation has no position on the bills. (2-22-89)