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RENAME I-275 AFTER VETS

House Bill 5557 as introduced
First Analysis (2-20-96)

Sponsor: Rep. Gerald Law
Committee: Transportation

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The Congressionally chartered organization known as the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) celebrates 75 years of service this year. This national group serves all veterans, whether or not they are members, and contributes to the well-being of the communities in which its local chapters are located. For example, Chapter 114 of the DAV, located within the City of Livonia, has approximately 1,500 members and will celebrate its fortieth anniversary next year. The DAV local chapters help veterans and their spouses and children file for benefits, provides social and recreational opportunities for veterans and their families, and serves the broader community by offering similar services for senior citizens and disabled children. To recognize their patriotism and service to the nation, this state, and their community, some have proposed renaming Interstate-275 as the Disabled American Veterans Memorial Highway.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would rename Interstate-275 as the "Disabled American Veterans Memorial Highway," and would direct the Department of Transportation to have suitable highway markers erected along the freeway displaying its new name. (Note: SCR 307 of 1978 previously named a portion of I-275 as the Philip A. Hart Memorial Highway.)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The bill is similar to House Bill 4725 of the current session, which passed both the House and the Senate but was vetoed by the governor. That bill proposed to rename the portion of I-275 running through Livonia as the "Disabled American Veterans of Livonia Memorial Highway" in recognition of the Livonia DAV chapter's upcoming fortieth anniversary. Though acknowledging the honor and distinction with which members of the DAV have served both the state of Michigan and the country, the governor vetoed the bill in part because a state highway, M-121 (Bristol Road in Genesee County), had previously been designated as the "Disabled American Veterans' Highway" and identified as such by erecting several signs. (Note: The veto

message incorrectly identified the highway as "M-21".) Further, where the bill would have named a state highway for a local organization, the veto message stated that designations and tributes for local chapters of state organizations would be more appropriately made at the local level.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Department of Transportation says it would cost the department approximately \$1,000 to have two signs erected at both ends of I-275 indicating the name proposed by the bill. (2-16-96)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill would recognize the work of the Disabled American Veterans in serving the needs of veterans, their families, and the broader community by renaming I-275, which runs north and south from I-96 to I-75, as the Disabled American Veterans Memorial Highway. The DAV was chartered by Congress over 75 years ago, after the end of World War I. Renaming highways after veterans organizations has become an accepted form of tribute to them in recent years (a total of sixteen highways in Michigan have been named in honor of veterans either by resolution or public act), and the bill would follow in that tradition by renaming the entire length of I-275 after the DAV.

Against:

If a state highway has already been named in honor of the DAV, to name another highway with the same name would be confusing. In addition, in 1978, SCR 307 named a portion of I-275 as the Philip A. Hart Memorial Highway in honor of the late U.S. Senator Philip Hart of Michigan. The bill would, in essence, strip one deserving Michigania of recognition in order to recognize other deserving Michigania, even though the latter currently have a highway in Michigan named in their honor. The bill could inadvertently set a precedent where the same roadways are named and renamed ad infinitum, resulting in confusion to drivers

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and offense to family members and organizations when their relative's or group's honor is removed and given to another. Since the resolution only specifies that the portion of I-275 extending from I-75 in Monroe County north to I-96 in Livonia be named after Sen. Hart, perhaps the portion extending north of I-96 could be designated in honor of the DAV. In that way, Michigan could retain its tribute to the late Senator and also honor a very deserving group of Michigan citizens.

Response:

Reportedly, the bill's sponsor intends to offer a substitute to make this change. Further, though M-121 had been designated as the Disabled American Veteran's Highway, the highway recently reverted to county jurisdiction and is no longer a state trunkline, leaving a question as to whether the DAV Highway signs are still posted. Therefore, there would not be two state highways with the same designation.

Against:

The Federal Highway Administration historically has discouraged the use of names in addition to numbered designations along interstate freeways, as the use of both can confuse motorists traveling at high speeds.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Transportation does not oppose the bill. (2-15 -96)

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.