

VETERANS MEMORIAL BRIDGES

Senate Bill 663 as passed by the Senate First Analysis (6-9-98)

Sponsor: Sen. Leon Stille
**Senate Committee: Transportation and
Tourism**
House Committee: Transportation

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The West Michigan Veterans Services Center, representing both deceased and living veterans in Muskegon County, has requested that two one-way bridges be designated to memorialize the 17,000 veterans from their community. They have asked that the tribute be dedicated to both the 12,000 veterans who served our country as soldiers during war, and also the 5,000 veterans who served in times of peace.

Already the veterans of the county have created a trail that is one and one-half miles long, and that runs between Muskegon and North Muskegon. Along the trail, veterans' supporters have placed 2,000 plaques commemorating the members of their families or their friends who have served in the armed services or merchant marine. Each plaque is 3 inches by 12 inches in size and contains the name, branch of service, and service dates for each veteran. The veterans memorial includes a lagoon, an island, a fountain, and benches along the parkway.

Two one-way bridges span Cedar Creek along the Veterans Memorial Parkway, and some have suggested that two signs be erected to name the highway bridges the Veterans Memorial Bridges. To name the bridges, the community must have the approval of the Department of Transportation.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Senate Bill 663 would create a new act to provide that the bridges on highway M-120 over Cedar Creek by the Veterans Memorial Park causeway, within the cities of Muskegon and North Muskegon, would be known as the "Veterans Memorial Bridges".

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Senate Fiscal Agency, the bill would have no fiscal impact on state or local government. (5-13-98)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The Muskegon County Road Commission has set aside funds and purchased signs to designate two highway bridges on M-120 as the Veterans Memorial Bridges. The bridges will be dedicated during a ceremony on Flag Day--June 12, 1998. Each Flag Day and every Memorial Day, the West Michigan Veterans Services Center places 2,000 flags along the Veterans Memorial Parkway, one at each bronze plaque honoring a veteran that has been purchased by a family member or friend.

In addition to acts of commemoration, the West Michigan Veterans Services Center offers area veterans a wide range of health and human services, providing 2,500 client contacts each month including transitional housing, a food bank, a clothing bank, a transportation program, mental health counseling, and more. Muskegon County is the only county in the state to levy a veterans assistance millage; 1/13 of a mill is set aside for veterans programs required by law, and an aggressive community-wide fundraising effort supports many other initiatives.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Transportation supports the bill. (6-3-98)

The West Michigan Veterans Services Center supports the bill. (6-4-98)

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ 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.