

Senate Fiscal Agency
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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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House Bill 4895 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Representative Bob Brown
House Committee: Advanced Technology and Computer Development
Senate Committee: Government Operations

Date Completed: 10-27-98

RATIONALE

The massive growth in the popularity and accessibility of the Internet in recent years has revolutionized the ability of private industry, private citizens, and public entities to produce, disseminate, and gather information. The website "<http://www.michiganlegislature.org/>" was established in September 1997 to provide Internet users with access to a variety of information regarding the Michigan Legislature. Documents and various data originate from both houses of the Legislature and the Legislative Service Bureau; the Library of Michigan provides administrative oversight. Information on the Michigan Legislature Internet site includes Senate and House bills and resolutions; bill analysis documents; Senate and House committee schedules, journals, calendars, and session schedules; Public Acts Tables for 1997 and 1998; and Michigan Compiled Laws Tables for 1997 and 1998. While many persons view the website as an excellent tool for the Legislature to provide, and for the people to obtain, critical information regarding legislative business, it has been pointed out that there is no formal requirement that the Legislature continue to provide information on the Internet. It has been suggested that the Legislature should be required, by statute, to place certain information on the Internet.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Legislative Council Act to require the Legislative Council, beginning July 1, 1999, to make available to the public on the Internet, free of charge, each fiscal bill analysis prepared by the House Fiscal Agency for the current legislative session. The information maintained by the Council and placed on the Internet under the bill would have to be made available in the shortest feasible time after the information was available. The information that was not maintained by the Council would have to

be made available in the shortest feasible time after it was made available to the Council.

The bill states that it would not alter or relinquish any copyright or other proprietary interest or entitlement of the State relating to any of the information made available.

Proposed MCL 4.1204f

BACKGROUND

House Bill 4895 (S-1) is one of several bills that propose to amend the Legislative Council Act to make available, free of charge, certain legislative information on the Internet. Senate Bills 1086, 1087, and 1088 would require the Legislative Council to make available Senate and House journals, bill analyses prepared by the Senate Fiscal Agency or the House Legislative Analysis Section, and fiscal bill analyses. House Bills 4875 (S-2), 4884 (S-1), and 5006 (S-2) would require the Council to make available the status of bills and resolutions, the text of bills, the legislative calendar and meeting notices, and the Michigan Compiled Laws database search and retrieval system.

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

The Internet has become an important tool for those who wish to acquire information in an inexpensive, fast, and efficient manner. Its popularity and use are likely to keep increasing. Currently, through its website the Legislature offers a substantial amount of useful information to enable any resident (or anyone anywhere in the world, for that matter) to keep track of proposed

legislation, legislative schedules, official legislative action, new laws, etc. Though the current climate is conducive to promoting citizen access to legislative information via the Internet, no one can say for sure that future legislatures will continue this practice. The bill would place in statute requirements for legislative information to be accessible on the Internet, and thus would ensure continued access to this information.

Supporting Argument

Not everyone has the opportunity to travel to Lansing to watch the Legislature in session or to pick up copies of bills in which they may be interested. Though copies of bills and other documents can be mailed to residents making requests, some bills move through the House and Senate too quickly for information requests to be addressed in a timely fashion by this method. Though faxing information and documents can help fill some requests, it is not economical to rely on faxes to meet a great number of information requests by constituents. The Internet can provide a quick and relatively inexpensive way for people to track a piece of legislation, or other legislative business.

Opposing Argument

The legislative website is already up and running, and has experienced high usage. A significant public outcry would be raised if the site were, for any reason, discontinued. The bill really is not needed.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

FISCAL IMPACT

The Legislature currently makes available on the Internet bill analyses. The cost is included with other information made available on the Internet (e.g., calendars and journals) by the Legislature. Approximately \$100,000 for hardware and \$400,000 for five FTEs have been allocated to the project.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.