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## MEDAL OF HONOR PLATES; VIETNAM MEMORIAL FUND PLATES

### Senate Bill 737 as passed by the Senate First Analysis (3-9-00)

**Sponsor: Sen. Bill Schuette**  
**House Committee: Transportation**  
**Senate Committee: Transportation  
and Tourism**

#### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the most distinguished decoration for military valor that a person in the military service can receive. As the nation's highest award for bravery, the Medal of Honor is bestowed only for extraordinary acts of heroism or self-sacrifice. Three veterans of the armed services residing in Michigan have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In recognition of this honor, the Michigan Vehicle Code requires the secretary of state to design a special Congressional Medal of Honor registration plate for state residents who received the medal. A person who applies for the special plate is required to pay a vehicle registration fee, as provided in the code. It has been suggested that, in further recognition of their service to the country, the code should exempt recipients of the Medal of Honor from having to pay the registration fee.

In addition, it has been suggested that the secretary of state design a special veterans memorial fund-raising registration plate, the revenue from which could be credited to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument Fund.

#### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to:

--Exempt from payment of the vehicle registration fee a person who was issued a medal of honor specialty plate.

--Require an application for the specialty plate to include proof that the person received the Congressional Medal of Honor, but waive the customary \$5 service fee.

--Provide for the issuance of a tab for persons with disabilities who applied for a medal of honor specialty plate.

--Require the secretary of state to develop a state-sponsored Michigan veterans memorial fund-raising registration plate and matching state-sponsored veterans memorial collector plate to be used to fund the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument Fund.

Currently, the secretary of state is required to design a special Congressional Medal of Honor registration plate for state residents who received the congressional medal. A special registration plate may be issued only for one vehicle intended for personal use by the applicant.

Under the bill, a person who received a Congressional Medal of Honor could apply to the secretary of state for a special registration plate on a form prescribed, which would have to be accompanied by proof that the applicant had been a medal of honor recipient. Under the bill the \$5 service fee that would customarily accompany an application would be waived. A person who qualified to be issued a medal of honor special registration plate would be entitled to only one plate that would be exempt from payment of the code's registration fees. However, the bill would require the secretary of state to deliver one or more special registration plates to the home address of the applicant at no additional cost.

A person with disabilities who applied for a medal of honor special registration plate would be issued a tab for persons with disabilities, as provided in the code, for his or her special registration plate. The secretary of state would require the same proof that the applicant was disabled as is required under the code for issuance of a permanent windshield placard.

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A medal of honor special registration plate would expire on the vehicle owner's birthday in a year in which new plates were issued by the secretary of state.

Finally, the bill would require the secretary of state to develop a state-sponsored Michigan veterans memorial fund-raising registration plate (and a matching state-sponsored collector plate). Any donations collected from the sale of these plates would be disbursed by the secretary of state to the state treasurer, who would credit the money to the Vietnam veterans memorial monument fund, and the funds would be used exclusively for the purposes described in provisions of the Michigan Vietnam Veterans Memorial Act.

MCL 257.217d

### ***HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:***

The House Transportation Committee reported the Senate-passed version of Senate Bill 737, including the amendments adopted on the Senate floor 1) to allow delivery of the registration plate to medal of honor winners; and 2) to require the creation of a veterans memorial fund-raising registration plate the proceeds from which would support the Vietnam veterans memorial monument fund.

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the bill would have a very minimal fiscal impact on the state associated with the loss of vehicle registration tax revenue. (3-7-00)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Currently, persons who are former prisoners of war (POWs), and those who are totally disabled veterans of war, are exempt from payment of vehicle registration fees for special registration plates. The bill would extend the same exemption to recipients of the medal of honor. According to committee testimony, there are three medal of honor recipients who reside in Michigan and who were honored for their acts of self-sacrifice during wartime. In honor of their extraordinary service, the state should waive the fees that the three medal of honor recipients would pay when they obtain a special registration plate issued in their honor, just as is the case for former POWs and totally disabled veterans.

#### ***For:***

This bill also would require the secretary of state to design a veterans memorial registration plate and accompanying fund-raiser collector plate. By purchasing these plates, citizens who register motor vehicles could contribute to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument Fund. Those who administer that fund plan to erect a monument on the Capitol grounds to honor the veterans of the armed services who served in Vietnam.

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Office of the Secretary of State supports the bill. (3-7-00)

Analyst: J. Hunault

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■ 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.