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CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS: EXTEND ELIGIBILITY

House Bill 4755 with committee amendment First Analysis (10-19-99)

Sponsor: Rep. Samuel Thomas III
**Committee: Conservation and Outdoor
Recreation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the National Civilian Conservation Corps provided employment opportunities for many of the nation's men. The jobs were aimed at achieving national conservation and recreation goals, and the program was praised for its contribution in helping young men develop new skills, as well as earn income to help their families. Michigan's recession in the 1980s, coupled with a large backlog of needed conservation work, led to the development of a similar conservation corps in Michigan. The program is administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and workers are recruited by both the DNR and the Department of Career Development, formerly the Michigan Jobs Commission. (For additional information on the Jobs Commission, see *Background Information*.)

Priority in hiring in the Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is given to recipients of public assistance. Efforts are also made to ensure that eligible minority persons, single heads of households, persons with disabilities, and equal numbers of eligible males and females are hired as corpsmembers. However, as well as providing work for unemployed youths, the CCC has been a valuable source of labor for the DNR. Corpsmembers work in various areas, such as the development of trails, cutting of trees, and in highway beautification. They are paid at the minimum wage rate from the interest and earnings of the Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Endowment Fund. However, the DNR reports that, of the 850 positions available in the corps, only 171 were filled during fiscal year 1998-99. It has been suggested that another segment of the population -- senior citizens -- be tapped for this work, and legislation has been proposed that would permit members of this age group to qualify as corpsmembers.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps Act establishes certain eligibility requirements upon corpsmembers. Applicants must be residents of the state, be unemployed, and be, except for supervisors, between 18 and 25 years of age on the date of application. House Bill 4755 would amend the act to specify that an applicant could be either 18 to 25 years of age or 55 years of age or older on the date of application.

The bill would also amend the act to update references to the former Department of Social Services (DSS) and to its programs. (Currently, the Department of Career Development [MDCD] has undertaken certain duties that were once the responsibility of the DSS).

MCL 409.306

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Executive Order Number 2 of 1996 reorganized the Department of Commerce into a new department, the Department of Consumer and Industry Services, and transferred some of the department's functions to the Michigan Jobs Commission. Effective April 5, 1999, the Jobs Commission was abolished by the governor, and its functions were divided between two new departments: the Department of Career Development (MDCD), and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

The Department of Career Development administers employment and job training programs such as "school-to-work" and "welfare-to-work" programs, occupational rehabilitation services for handicapped individuals, and job search assistance for displaced workers.

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Administered as a corporation under the auspices of a board drawn mostly from the private sector, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation is modeled after local economic development corporations. The MEDC oversees the state's travel promotion, business ombudsman, and the Michigan Strategic Fund. It conducts marketing campaigns, and forms partnerships with universities to attract high-technology employers to the state.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps Endowment Fund was established under the provisions of Public Act 394 of 1994, and received \$20 million of the proceeds from the sale of the State Accident Fund. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) expends only the interest and earnings from the fund to operate the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

A House Fiscal Agency (HFA) report estimates that the bill would have no impact on state funds. (10-11-99)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which provides jobs for unemployed Michigan youths from urban and rural areas, has provided a valuable source of labor for Michigan parks. However, the DNR could use more corpsmembers than the 171 who were accepted during the past fiscal year, and the senior citizen population would seem to be the logical field from which such workers might be drawn. As workers have increasingly taken advantage of early retirement opportunities during the past several years, it has become customary to see senior citizens employed in jobs once considered the province of teenagers and young adults. Additionally, many senior citizens have had a lifelong involvement in conservation efforts and would probably welcome the opportunity to work in this area.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has no position on the bill. (10-15-99)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) has no position on the bill. (10-15-99)

Analyst: R. Young

■ 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.