

Senate Fiscal Agency  
P. O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536



Telephone: (517) 373-5383  
Fax: (517) 373-1986  
TDD: (517) 373-0543

House Bill 4776 (Substitute H-1 as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Representative Larry Julian

House Committee: Veterans Affairs

Senate Committee: Human Resources, Labor, Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs

Date Completed: 4-5-00

### **RATIONALE**

Military service veterans organizations have expressed an interest in offering schools and classroom teachers the opportunity to invite veterans to speak to students about military service. It has been pointed out that veterans have a wealth of knowledge about the armed services, war, and the sacrifices that men and women have made throughout the years in support of this country. Further, it has been pointed out that while some local service organizations have made efforts to provide the chance for veterans to share their experiences with schoolchildren, there is no statewide mechanism to coordinate this effort. It has been suggested that a veterans speakers program be established within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would create a new act to establish a veterans speakers program within the Veterans' Affairs Directorate of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Under the program, the Directorate could do all of the following:

- Create a list of veterans who were willing to visit local schools and make presentations of their military experiences. The list would have to include each veteran's length of service, geographical area of service, and rank.
- Encourage veterans' organizations to participate in the program.
- Create a pamphlet that encouraged schools to use the experiences of veterans in the course of their educational instruction. The pamphlet would have to include the name and means of contacting appropriate veterans from the list of veterans willing to participate in the program.
- Distribute the pamphlet to all the school districts in Michigan.
- Provide a system of receiving evaluations of the speakers and the program from teachers and students who used the program.
- Update the list of available veteran speakers at

least annually. The Directorate could make the list available on the Internet through the Department's web site.

The bill specifies that the proposed speakers program would not be a replacement for any instruction required by any other law, and the bill would not require a teacher to participate in the program. A teacher who chose to participate could tailor the subject matter and select the veteran whom he or she determined was most appropriate for the students.

The Director of the Veterans' Affairs Directorate would have to report annually to the Senate and House committees having jurisdiction over veterans affairs regarding the program's merits and use.

### **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**

While efforts have been made on a local level to make military veterans available to speak to schoolchildren, these efforts have been limited. The bill would allow the Department of Military Affairs to create a list of veterans who were willing to visit local schools and make presentations to students regarding military service. The stories that veterans have to tell help people realize the sacrifices that have been made by others for their country. Having an active speakers bureau composed of wartime veterans who were willing to share their stories with schoolchildren in their classrooms could make history lessons vivid and compelling in a way that a textbook cannot; would help students to understand the sacrifices their elders have made for democracy; and could link young and old citizens as members of a community in which service and commitment to others are clearly valued.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Since the Veterans' Affairs Directorate would be permitted, but not required, to carry out the bill's provisions, the departmental cost of compliance with the bill could range from zero dollars to approximately \$50,000 per year. Should the Department choose to do so, it could implement the bill's provisions by using its existing resources, including the Department's existing Internet website. A more comprehensive approach to the creation of a veterans speakers program could require the Directorate to hire an additional staff person at an additional annual cost of \$35,000 to \$50,000.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Baker

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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.