



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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**ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Senate Bill 395 as passed by the Senate
First Analysis (2-14-02)**

**Sponsor: Sen. Thaddeus G. McCotter
House Committee: House Oversight and
Operations
Senate Committee: Government
Operations**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Considered the first significant genocide of the 20th century, the Armenian genocide commenced on April 24, 1915 under the guise of World War I. On that fateful day, 300 Armenian leaders, writers, thinkers, and professionals in Constantinople (present day Istanbul) were rounded up and murdered by the Young Turk party of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, thousands more poor Armenians were murdered in the streets and in their homes in Constantinople. Over the course of the following years, the remaining Armenians were removed from their homes and forcibly marched to concentration camps. An estimated 1 million to 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives, out of 2.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

In the years following these events, several nations, including the United States, have issued declarations officially recognizing the Armenian genocide. Michigan and several other states have adopted resolutions in years past recognizing the genocide and declaring a day of remembrance. Armenians throughout the world commemorate April 24th as the day to remember the events of the genocide. Thus, legislation has been introduced to declare April 24 as a Michigan Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill states that the Legislature declares April 24 of each year as the Michigan Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. The calendar week encompassing that day would be designated as the Days of Remembrance in the state, in memory of the victims of the genocide, and in honor of the survivors.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill would have no fiscal impact on either the state or local government. (2-10-02)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Despite the fact that the Turkish government continues to this day to deny the existence of the Armenian Genocide, the actions taken by the Turkish government against its Armenian citizens in 1915 were quickly condemned by the U.S., Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria. The atrocities brought on by the Turkish government through its policy of extermination through starvation, exhaustion, and brutality decimated the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population.

By observing a day and an entire week of remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, the state encourages its citizens to recognize and remember the horrific events against millions of innocent Armenians that transpired in 1915. These observances will facilitate an open dialogue on the destructive effects on society as a whole when bigotry, hatred, persecution, and ignorance are free to run rampant. This will better prepare citizens to reflect on ways that these tragic events could have been prevented, and can be prevented in the future.

Against:

The bill sets bad precedent by establishing a state observance in statute. Most state observances are established by legislative resolutions.

Response:

Recent legislative resolutions have established Armenian Genocide remembrance days for a particular year. By establishing the day in statute, the bill would ensure that the day and the week-long

Senate Bill 395 (2-14-02)

Days of Remembrance would be observed every year. Furthermore, several other observances have been placed into statute, such as “Log Cabin Day” (the last Sunday in June), “Mrs. Rosa L. Parks Day” (the first Monday following February 4); and “Michigan Garden Week” (the first full week in June).

POSITIONS:

There are no positions on the bill.

Analyst: M. Wolf

■ 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.