



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

House Office Building, 9 South  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: 517/373-6466

**M-82; "KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL  
HIGHWAY"**

**House Bill 5637 as introduced  
First Analysis (2-28-02)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Mike Pumford  
Committee: Transportation**

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 when 135,000 men from North Korea invaded South Korea. Two days later, President Harry S. Truman deployed the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet to waters off Taiwan to prevent the spread of the conflict, as the United States advanced its foreign policy to contain the expansion of the communist form of government. That same day a U.S. squadron of F-82s shot down a North Korean Yak fighter, and a couple days later a bombardment group of 18 B-26s bombed the Heijo Airfield near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. By July 1 the first U.S. infantry unit arrived in South Korea--the first of nearly 1.8 million men who would serve there--and the three-year Korean War was underway. Before the United States, North Korea, and China signed an armistice on July 27, 1953, a total of 33,665 American soldiers were to die (although some also include the 3,275 non-hostile dead for total casualties of 36,940), 92,134 were to be wounded, and 7,140 men were to become prisoners of war. See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below. While the signing of the armistice ended the war, it failed to bring about a permanent peace, because the Republic of Korea (South) and the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (North) have never signed a peace treaty.

Recently, veterans of the Korean War launched an official three-year period of recognition, in order to identify, thank and honor those who fought. The 50<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Korean War officially began on June 25, 2000. To date, events have included wreaths laid at Arlington National Cemetery and the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., symposiums, dinners, and awards ceremonies. In addition, the Inchon Landing was re-enacted in Norfolk, Virginia, as well as in Inchon, Korea. Hundreds of Commemoration partners throughout Michigan, the United States, and including groups in the allied nations (for example, in Turkey, Australia, and New Zealand) have scheduled events until the official closing ceremony on Veterans Day, November 11, 2003. Organizers of the 50<sup>th</sup>

Commemoration say they hope the series of events will recognize and remember prisoners of war and those whose remains have not been recovered; recognize the contributions of women and minorities, since for the first time, the fighting force was integrated (See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below); provide the American public with a clear understanding of the lessons learned from the war; inform future generations about the U.S. military's contributions in maintaining freedom; recognize the contributions of the United Nations forces; and, ensure that the commemorative events strengthen and unify the bonds of friendship throughout the world.

The American Legion Post in Newaygo County has requested that Korean War veterans from that area be honored by commemorating an 18-mile portion of a local highway, and legislation has been introduced to that end.

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

House Bill 5637 would amend the Michigan Memorial Highway Act to name a portion of Highway M-82 that begins at the City of Newaygo in Newaygo County, and extends east to Howard City in Montcalm County, as the Korean War Memorial Highway.

The Memorial Highway Act provides that the Department of Transportation will erect suitable markers indicating the name of the highway "when sufficient private contributions are received to completely cover the cost of erecting and maintaining those markers."

MCL 250.1001 et al.

***BACKGROUND INFORMATION:***

*Total Korean War casualties.* In addition to the more than 36,000 U.S. soldiers who lost their lives in South Korea, casualties were suffered by Australia,

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Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Further, according to one source, the official number of South Koreans dead, wounded and missing was 843,572; the number of North Koreans dead, wounded or missing, 520,000; while the number of Chinese casualties was 390,000, and the number of casualties from the Soviet Union was 299.

*The first integrated force.* On July 26, 1948, about two years before the Korean War began, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981, calling for equal treatment and opportunity for all within the armed services, without regard to race. President Truman's ultimate intent was desegregation of the armed services, although he did not explicitly order an end to segregation in the military. The different branches of the services moved toward integration in different ways, but during the Korean War the economic and social advantages of desegregation became apparent to all, creating a more effective fighting force.

*United Nations Joint Force.* In addition to U.S. troops, the war was fought by soldiers from the first joint force deployed by the United Nations. The soldiers comprising the joint force came from Belgium, the British Commonwealth, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Philippines, Thailand and Turkey. Further, non-military United Nations forces came from India, Italy, Norway, and Sweden.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the bill has no state or local fiscal impact. (2-25-02)

### **ARGUMENTS:**

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

It is appropriate that the state recognize the extraordinary contribution of those who have provided service to our country during times of war. The state's recognition is appropriate for two reasons. First, it allows citizens to honor those among them who demonstrated courage and valor in defense of freedom. Further, the state's recognition makes an ongoing public dialogue possible as it keeps citizens mindful about the horrors of war, and the importance of an unrelenting effort to seek peaceful solutions to social and political problems.

Among the ways that the state can recognize those whose duty to their country extracted a high cost, in terms of physical and emotional well-being because of military service, is to designate public works in their memory.

### **POSITIONS:**

The Department of Transportation has no position on the bill. (2-27-02)

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.