

VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

House Bill 4115 as introduced
First Analysis (3-11-03)

Sponsor: Rep. Stephen Adamini
Committee: Transportation

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

It is appropriate that the state recognize the extraordinary contribution of those who have served as soldiers in the armed services of the United States, whether or not they were injured or mortally wounded in service to our country. The state's recognition is appropriate for two reasons: First, it allows citizens to honor those among them who were willing to disregard personal gain, and fight for the freedoms and liberty that are promised by the constitutional form of government here in the United States. Further, the state's recognition makes an ongoing public dialogue possible as it keeps citizens mindful about the horror 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 who put their duty to their country before personal gain, often extracting a high cost in terms of physical and emotional well-being, is to designate public works in their memory. To that end, legislation is sometimes introduced. For example, recently a highway rest area near Perry, Michigan was named in honor of Purple Heart recipients, as well as a segment of nearby highway. Further, a proposal to name a roadway in the Upper Peninsula after a courageous winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor also was enacted into law by the legislature. In addition, a memorial highway has been designated near Battle Creek, in order to honor the 94th Combat Infantry Division that served with General George Patton's 3rd Army during World War II. See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below.

According to committee testimony, there are 61 highways in Michigan that have been designated to honor memorable people, groups, or events. Of those, 24 highways are designated to honor veterans, although only one is located in the Upper Peninsula, the stretch of I-75 between St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie.

The veterans groups in the western counties of Michigan's Upper Peninsula have indicated to their state representatives in the 108th, 109th and 110th

legislative districts that they would like to designate a memorial highway to honor all veterans in their region. At their request, legislation has been introduced to name a highway that spans part or all of five counties, in tribute to the veterans of the armed services.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4115 would amend the Memorial Highway Act to re-name a portion of M-28. The bill specifies that Highway M-28, beginning at the eastern city limits of Ishpeming in Marquette county, and continuing west through Baraga county, Houghton county, Ontonagon county, and Gogebic county to the intersection of Highway M-28 and Highway US-2, would be known as the "Veterans Memorial Highway."

MCL 250.1001 to 250.1100

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Recently the legislature enacted Public Act 142 of 2001, the Michigan Memorial Highway Act, in order to consolidate and codify in a single statute more than 60 highways and portions of highways that have been named in memory of individuals and groups having historical prominence in their communities. Under that act, the Department of Transportation provides for the erection of suitable signs at the approach of any of the highways, after sufficient private contributions have been received to pay the cost of erecting and maintaining those markers.

All memorial highways are listed on the Department of Transportation web site at www.mdot.state.mi.us/misc/memhiways.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that Section 2 of Public Act 142 indicates that the state transportation department will provide for the placement of suitable

markers to indicate the name of the highway, after sufficient private contributions are received to completely cover the cost of placing and maintaining the signs. As a result the bill has no state or local fiscal impact. (2-24-03)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Historical events and prominent citizens deserve recognition in our communities. One way to commemorate events and people and to ensure ongoing public awareness is to place a sign along a public roadway. This bill allows the citizens of Michigan, and in particular the citizens of the 109th and 110th legislative districts in the Upper Peninsula, to express their appreciation for the courage of freedom fighters. Naming a well-traveled portion of the state's busy road system in their honor gives the veterans of all wars the public recognition they deserve. While this recognition allows citizens to honor those among them who demonstrated courage in defense of freedom, it also makes possible an ongoing public dialogue about the horrors of war, and the importance of an unrelenting effort to seek peaceful solutions to social and political problems.

POSITIONS:

There are no positions on the bills.

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ 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.