



Senate Fiscal Agency  
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 365 (as passed by the Senate)  
Sponsor: Senator Bill Hardiman  
Committee: Government Operations

Date Completed: 5-26-05

### **RATIONALE**

Richard H. Austin, who died in 2001, had a significant impact on the State in his various positions as a public servant. He is known for his accomplishments in the accounting field, as well as his service as the Wayne County Auditor and the Secretary of State, and as a delegate to Michigan's Constitutional Convention. In order to remember and honor Richard H. Austin, whom some have called a "trailblazer", it has been suggested that a State building be named after him.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend Public Act 173 of 1968, which provides for the naming of certain State buildings, to rename the State Treasury Building as the "Richard H. Austin Department of State Building".

The Act provides that the building occupied by the Department of Treasury is designated as the State Treasury Building. The bill would delete the reference to occupancy by the Department of Treasury, in addition to renaming the building.

MCL 19.131

### **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**

Richard H. Austin was born in Alabama and moved to Detroit with his family at the age of 11. He was the valedictorian of his graduating class at Cass Technical High

School and earned his bachelor's degree from the Detroit Institute of Technology. He became the State's first African-American certified public accountant, and went on to form the Austin, Washington and Davenport accounting firm with two associates. Richard Austin also was the first African-American to be elected to the position of Wayne County Auditor, and the first African-American to be elected to a statewide office, other than the State Supreme Court, when he was elected Secretary of State in 1970. He was reelected five times and served until 1994, making him the longest-serving Secretary of State in Michigan's history.

Richard Austin was an advocate of traffic safety, supporting mandatory seat belt and motorcycle helmet laws, as well as other driver education and safety measures. During his tenure as the Secretary of State, he implemented the replacement of vehicle registration tabs (as opposed to annual license plate replacement) and instituted mail renewals, saving the State and taxpayers time and money. Additionally, he worked to make Michigan the first state to implement voter registration in conjunction with driver licensing.

In recognition of Richard Austin's academic and professional accomplishments, his function as a role model, and his contributions to the public, it would be fitting to name the State Treasury Building, which houses the Secretary of State's Office, after him.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would result in costs related to the name sign and the street-level sign. The cost of the Romney Building signs was \$7,130. The signs for the Williams Building cost \$4,091.80.

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Bowerman

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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.