



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 764 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Jason E. Allen
Committee: Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs

Date Completed: 12-19-05

RATIONALE

To commemorate the heritage of the Purple Heart, which is awarded to members of the armed forces who are wounded or killed as a result of enemy activity, and to memorialize the sacrifices of those who are awarded the medal, the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) is seeking to have a Purple Heart monument erected and dedicated in each state. Reportedly, 43 other states currently have a Purple Heart monument. The MOPH evidently has been unsuccessful in obtaining the approval of the Michigan Veterans' Memorial Park Commission to have a monument placed at Veterans Memorial Park in Lansing. Some people feel that building a monument in that park to honor Michigan citizens who have been awarded the Purple Heart should be required statutorily. (Please see **BACKGROUND** for more information on the Purple Heart.)

CONTENT

The bill would create the "Purple Heart Recognition Act" to require the erection of a monument to honor Michigan citizens who have received the Purple Heart Medal. The monument would have to be located in Veterans Memorial Park in Lansing.

The monument and all expenses associated with its erection would have to be paid for by the Michigan Chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. The monument would have to conform to the style and design established by the Military Order of the Purple Heart of the United States of America.

"Veterans memorial park" would refer to the 2.5-acre parcel of land established and legally described in the Michigan Vietnam

Veterans Memorial Act (MCL 35.1055a). (That Act established the Veterans Memorial Park and required the Vietnam Veterans Memorial monument to be located there.)

BACKGROUND

General George Washington created the Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit, now commonly called the Purple Heart, during the Revolutionary War. General Washington sought to recognize officers for outstanding valor by rewarding them with additional pay or an advance in rank. When he was ordered to stop because the military could not afford to pay the soldiers, much less the officers, he created the Badge of Military Merit for soldiers who displayed not only "unusual gallantry...but also...extraordinary fidelity and essential service". The medal, he specified, was to be in the form of a heart made from purple cloth or silk, and was to be worn on the left breast. There were three known recipients of the medal during the Revolutionary War.

The Badge of Military Merit lay dormant until 1931, when General Douglas MacArthur revived it for the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. The reissued medal is a gold-plated brass heart, with a bust of Washington in the center and, at the top, the Washington family coat of arms, which contains three red stars and two red horizontal stripes. (This coat of arms is believed to be one inspiration for the American flag.)

In 1932, the War Department announced the award and the revised eligibility criteria for receiving a Purple Heart: During battle

with an enemy, recipients must have sustained a wound that necessitated medical treatment. (Therefore, not every wound incurred because of the conditions of war, such as trenchfoot or frostbite, would make a soldier eligible for a Purple Heart.) At the time, the award was limited to the Army. In 1942, President Roosevelt extended the award to the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard beginning December 6, 1941. Later, President Truman retroactively extended the award to cover World War I soldiers. In 1962, President Kennedy extended eligibility to "any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with an armed force...has been, or may hereafter be, wounded". President Reagan amended President Kennedy's order in 1984 to include those wounded or killed as a result of an "international terrorist attack". In 1997, under President Clinton, the award again was limited to members of the armed forces.

Shortly after the award was reinstituted in 1931, a group of combat wounded veterans in Ansonia, Connecticut, formed the first chapter of a civilian organization for Purple Heart recipients. The organization grew rapidly during and after World War II, and is now known as the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

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

The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration in the world in present use, and the first award made available to a common soldier. Recipients of the award need not be recommended for it; rather, a soldier is entitled to a Purple Heart upon meeting specific criteria. It would be a fitting tribute to Michigan soldiers wounded or killed in battle to honor them with a monument in the Veterans Memorial Park, which is located two blocks directly west of the State Capitol building, where a pedestrian pathway meets the Hall of Justice.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart reportedly is seeking to have a similar monument honoring Purple Heart Medal winners erected in each state. A

representative of the MOPH testified before the Senate Committee on Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs that there are approximately 60,000 Purple Heart recipients living in Michigan, but, while 43 other states apparently have Purple Heart monuments, Michigan still does not. Michigan should follow the example of other states and honor its Purple Heart Medal recipients with a monument in the Veterans Memorial Park.

Response: The Michigan Veterans' Memorial Park Commission, a Type II agency within the Department of Management and Budget (DMB), was created by Executive Reorganization Order No. 2001-4 and is charged with assisting the DMB in the development, management, and maintenance of the Michigan Veterans Memorial Park. Reportedly, the Commission has rejected requests to place a Purple Heart monument in the park because of a lack of sufficient space.

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Bruce 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.