



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 302 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Bruce Caswell
Committee: Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security

(as passed by the Senate)

Date Completed: 5-20-13

RATIONALE

The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the armed forces who are wounded or killed in action as a result of enemy activity. To honor combat-wounded veterans for their service and sacrifice, several states have passed legislation designating the states as Purple Heart states. Some people believe that Michigan should be the next Purple Heart State. (Please see **BACKGROUND** for information on the Purple Heart.)

CONTENT

The bill would enact the following statement: "This state is designated a purple heart state, honoring our combat wounded veterans for their service and sacrifice by allowing the United States of America to maintain its sovereignty."

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 are 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.

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. At the time, the award was limited to the Army. Beginning December 6, 1941, President Roosevelt extended the award to the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard. 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 reinstated 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 involving combat wounds. Several states have passed, or are considering, legislation designating them as Purple Heart states. In these times, it seems fitting to honor the service and sacrifice of Purple Heart veterans by designating Michigan as a Purple Heart State.

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.