



Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

BILL



ANALYSIS

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986

Senate Bill 389 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Judy K. Emmons
Committee: Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security

(enrolled version)

Date Completed: 6-20-13

RATIONALE

As part of a nationwide program to honor veterans that was known as Operation Recognition, Public Act 181 of 2001 was enacted to allow school districts to offer high school diplomas to certain World War II veterans who had left school to serve in the military and did not graduate. Public Act 203 of 2003 amended the statute to extend that authorization to veterans of the Korean war. Some people believe that veterans who left school before graduating and served in the Vietnam era should be afforded the same opportunity to receive their high school diplomas.

- Served under honorable conditions during World War II or the Korean conflict.
- Was enrolled, at the time he or she was drafted or enlisted, in a high school in the district to which the application for a diploma is made.

The bill would include in the definition of "qualified military veteran" a veteran who served during the Vietnam era between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975. The bill also would delete the requirement that the veteran be at least 65 or have had attained that age, if deceased. The remaining conditions that apply to a World War II or Korean war veteran also would apply to a Vietnam era veteran.

MCL 35.341

CONTENT

The bill would amend Public Act 181 of 2001 to permit school boards to award high school diplomas to certain Vietnam era veterans. The bill also would delete the minimum age requirement for awarding diplomas under the Act.

The Act permits the board of a school district to award a high school diploma to a "qualified military veteran", which means a veteran who meets all of the following criteria:

- Before graduation from high school, he or she enlisted in, or was drafted into, the armed forces during World War II between December 16, 1940, and December 31, 1946, or during the Korean conflict between June 27, 1950, and January 31, 1955.
- Is at least 65 years old, if living, or had attained 65 years, if deceased.
- Did not graduate from high school.

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

Students who left high school early to serve the country in time of war sometimes have not had the opportunity to continue their high school education after completing their service. Upon returning from military service, these veterans may have been too old to return to school or might have had family and work responsibilities that did not allow them to complete their high school education. Under Michigan law, a school district may grant a diploma to a veteran who left high school to serve during World War II or the Korean war, if the statutory

criteria are met. Vietnam era veterans also sometimes left high school early in order to serve in the nation's military, so the authorization for a district to award high school diplomas to veterans should apply to them as well. Allowing this would be an expression of the State's gratitude to Vietnam veterans for their service and sacrifice.

While all of the World War II and Korea veterans meet the Act's age requirement, and the oldest of the Vietnam era veterans also are over 65, the youngest vets of that era are currently in their mid- to late-50s. To accommodate these veterans, and not make them wait several years to qualify for the diploma-granting program, the bill would eliminate the 65-year age requirement.

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

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

Fiscal Analyst: Kathryn Summers

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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.