

Rep. Hughes offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 36.

A resolution to express the Legislature's position that the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund board should return responsibility and control to the county Veterans Trust Fund Boards.

Whereas, The Michigan Veterans Trust Fund was established by Public Act 9 of 1946 (1st Ex. Session) to provide temporary assistance to eligible Michigan wartime veterans and their families experiencing economic hardships. Assistance is available for veterans and their families to prevent "undue hardship." Examples of situations in which help may be given include hospitalization, medical services which cannot be secured from another source, food, fuel, clothing, or shelter; and

Whereas, Under Public Act 84 of 2015 (Section 407 (3)) the Legislature directed the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) to establish a system to apply for assistance online. The "Regional Model Pilot" was conducted between July 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016 to test the feasibility of "expanding emergency assistance access beyond physical offices and limited office hours by simplifying the application process." The pilot was also intended to determine if administrative funding could be reduced using a regional model to administer the program rather than having offices in each county; and

Whereas, The pilot study was conducted in two regions: Region 4 consisting of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa counties, and Region 9, consisting of Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw counties. Beginning in July, the authorized agents and county committees in the affected counties stopped accepting emergency assistance applications and veterans in need of assistance applied using the Internet. Although the pilot ended in December, the MVAA has not returned control of emergency assistance to the county level; and

Whereas, Numerous problems have been reported through the pilot study by veterans and county veteran trust fund boards, including a disconnect between those applying for assistance and the Agency. Additionally, there have been reports that the response time for a decision was longer under the pilot study and some administrative costs were increased. Although some changes may be needed to help make the process for applying for benefits more efficient, county veterans trust fund boards have effectively served our veterans for years and should continue to be the first contact for emergency grant requests; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we express that it is the Legislature's position that the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund board should return responsibility and control back to the county Veterans Trust Fund Boards until the Legislature, the MVAA, the county Trust Fund Boards and our state's Veteran Service Organizations work together to pass a permanent solution that allows for the most effective use of Veterans Trust Fund revenue for the purposes outlined in our state's Constitution and accompanying statutes; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the head of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Board of Trustees.