

Legislative Analysis



ARETHA L. FRANKLIN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

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House Bill 4060 as reported from committee

Sponsor: Rep. Leslie Love

1st Committee: Transportation

2nd Committee: Ways and Means

Complete to 3-12-19

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

(Enacted as Public Act 46 of 2019)

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4060 would amend the Michigan Memorial Highway Act to designate the portion of highway M-10 in the city of Detroit, beginning at the intersection with Livernois Avenue and extending south to the intersection with I-94, as the "Aretha L. Franklin Memorial Highway."

The bill would take effect 90 days after its enactment.

Proposed MCL 250.2083

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to committee testimony and news reports, Aretha L. Franklin was born on March 25, 1942 in Memphis Tennessee. Her father, the Reverend C. L. Franklin, moved the family to Detroit, Michigan in 1944. Aretha grew up singing gospel music in the choir of her father's New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit and soon became a star soloist. Gospel, however, was only part of her vocabulary. Jazz, blues, rock, and opera were all hers to command. Ms. Franklin said in an interview with the *New York Times* in 2007 that her father had told her that she "would sing for kings and queens." She added: "Fortunately I've had the good fortune do so. And presidents."

Ms. Franklin was dubbed the "Queen of Soul" in 1967 by Pervis "The Blues Man" Spann, after her performance at the Regal Theater in Chicago. She recalled, "[Spann] walked on stage one evening with a crown, and I went, 'Whooooa, What is this?'" She embraced the newfound title, however, saying in 2015, "Who wouldn't want to be called 'Queen'?" During her decades-long career, Ms. Franklin had more than 20 number one R&B hits, nearly 50 Top 50 hits, singles sales that surpassed the \$10 million mark, and 18 Grammy awards to her name.

She was the recipient of numerous honorary doctorates, including from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Brown University, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, Bethune-Cookman College, to name a few. She received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1979, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005, and was the first woman inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. She was also a recipient of the *Detroit News* Michiganiaan of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018. The entire list of her honors and awards is too extensive to detail.

Ms. Franklin was also a supporter of civil rights and an advocate for social change. She was known to be a compassionate sponsor of Detroit area families in need of food, clothing, household items or financial assistance. Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan said, “Few people in the history of our city have been as universally loved or left as indelible a mark as Aretha... Throughout her extraordinary career, she earned the love—and, yes, the respect—of millions of people, not just for herself and for women everywhere, but for the city she loved so dearly and called home.”

Aretha Louise Franklin died on August 16, 2018. She was 76 years old.

Dedicating a portion of Highway M-10 in the city of Detroit would be an appropriate way to honor a music and cultural icon who selflessly gave of her time, her vocal and pianistic talents, and her energy and resources to the citizens of Detroit, the state of Michigan, and the United States of America.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Section 2 of the Michigan Memorial Highway Act indicates that the state transportation department shall provide for the erection of suitable markers indicating the name of the highway only “when sufficient private contributions are received to completely cover the cost of erecting and maintaining those markers.” As a result, the bill has no state or local fiscal impact.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Estate of Aretha Franklin testified in support of the bill. (2-26-19)

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., indicated support for the bill. (2-26-19)

Real Entertainers, Artists and Athletes Lead indicated support for the bill. (2-26-19)

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