

VIETNAM VETERAN RECOGNITION CERTIFICATE

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House Bill 4065 as reported from committee

Sponsor: Rep. Robert J. Bezotte

Committee: Military, Veterans and Homeland Security

Complete to 3-9-22

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

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4065 would amend the Michigan Military Act to authorize the adjutant general to award the Michigan Vietnam Veteran Recognition Certificate in the name of the legislature.

An individual meeting all of the following could be awarded the certificate:

- He or she is a Michigan citizen or was a Michigan citizen while serving in the *Armed Forces of the United States*.
- He or she was honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances.
- He or she served during the Vietnam War era (the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending May 7, 1975).

Armed Forces of the United States would mean the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the Michigan National Guard and reserve components.

The certificate would also include an option of a special designation developed by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA) that would recognize individuals who were exposed during their service to dioxin or phenoxy herbicides (such as those in Agent Orange). To receive this designation, the individual would have to demonstrate in a form and manner specified by MVA that, while serving in the armed forces, he or she was exposed to dioxin or phenoxy herbicides, as evidenced by a medical diagnosis of a disease associated with dioxin or phenoxy herbicides and any other proof required by the adjutant general.

The certificate could be presented to a designated representative of a deceased certificate recipient. An individual could not be awarded more than one certificate.

The adjutant general, in conjunction with the director of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, would have to develop and publish rules to carry out the bill's provisions.

MCL 32.582

BRIEF DISCUSSION:

Committee testimony discussed the importance to Michigan of all veterans and of giving recognition to veterans. However, as the bill sponsor indicated, Michigan currently does

not have a certificate program to recognize Vietnam veterans. While some questions were raised in committee as to how Michigan veterans would be made aware of the certificate program, the bill was ultimately unanimously reported.

BACKGROUND:

House Bill 4065 is substantially similar to House Bill 5601 of the 2019-20 legislative session, which was referred to second committee in December 2020.¹

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill could result in minimal costs to the state legislature and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and would have no impact on local units of government. Minimal administrative MVAA staff time costs would come from developing and publishing rules for granting the award. The legislature could incur minimal monetary costs from developing and producing copies of certificates to awardees of the Vietnam Veteran Recognition Certificate. The bill is permissive and does not require certificates to be awarded. Costs to the legislature and MVAA would be able to be absorbed through ongoing appropriations.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs testified in support of the bill. (2-22-22)

The Marine Corps League indicated a neutral position on the bill. (2-22-22)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

¹ HB 5601: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2020-HB-5601>.