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## MONROE COUNTY MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY

### House Bill 5028 (Substitute H-3) First Analysis (11-30-99)

**Sponsor: Rep. Randy Richardville**  
**Committee: Veterans Affairs**

#### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

One of the ways to honor veterans is to name highways after them. Legislation has been introduced to do this for the portion of Interstate Highway 75 that goes through Monroe County.

#### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would create a new act to designate the part of interstate highway I-75 located in Monroe County the "Medal of Honor Recipient and American Legion Memorial Highway." The Department of Transportation would erect suitable markers at the approach to the part of the highway located in Monroe County only when sufficient private contributions were received to pay the cost of erecting the markers.

#### ***BACKGROUND INFORMATION:***

Veteran's memorialized state highways. According to the Department of Transportation (MDOT), Michigan has a tradition of memorializing highways that began with the first recorded highway memorialization in 1919. While not all memorializations are of veterans' groups, memorialization of these groups has been particularly popular with constituents of state representatives and senators, and there have been many state (not to mention local) roadways named for veterans' groups. Memorialization of state highways over the years has taken place through a variety of legislative mechanisms, including House or Senate resolutions, House or Senate concurrent resolutions, and state laws. MDOT currently is in the process of compiling a list of memorialized state highways (local units of government also apparently can memorialize highways under their jurisdiction), but that list has not yet been completed. By 1996, though, apparently at least sixteen state highways in Michigan had been named in honor of veterans, either by resolution or public act.

Some of the memorialized state, or state portions of interstate, highways are as follows:

- House Concurrent Resolution 21 of 1969 designated the Michigan portion of I-75 as "*the American Legion Memorial Highway*";
- In 1978, M-59 between Pontiac and Utica was named "*the veterans' memorial freeway*";
- In 1980, M-21 between Flint and Port Huron was named "*the veterans' memorial highway*," while in 1980, M-21 between Lapeer and Flint also was named "*the veterans' memorial highway*", and House Resolution 365 of 1989 named M-125 in Monroe County "*the Veterans' Memorial Highway*";
- Public Act 240 of 1999 designated M-59 between Howell and M-3 near Mount Clemens (except for the portion of M-59 between Pontiac and Utica) "*the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Highway*";
- Public Act 124 of 1994 designated I-96 "*the Amvets Memorial Highway*";
- M-37 in Lake County was named "*the World War II Veterans' Memorial Highway*" in 1995;
- Public Act 185 of 1996 designated I-275 north of the Livonia intersection of I-275 and I-96 "*the Disabled American Veterans' Memorial Highway*" (in addition, M-121, which has since reportedly reverted to county jurisdiction and is now known as Bristol Road, in Genesee County also had previously been designated "*the Disabled American Veterans' Highway*");

Department of Transportation policy. According to the Department of Transportation, over recent years the department has been working on a policy with regard to the memorialization of highways with a view to

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encouraging a reasonable, consistent approach to memorialization. This policy now has been proposed in legislation, in House Bill 5050, which would create a new act to regulate the cost of placing signs and markers that honored individuals or organizations by naming or renaming a highway (or part of a highway) in their honor. Under the bill, the department could provide for the erection of such signs only if sufficient private contributions were received to completely cover the cost. According to the House Fiscal Agency, the Department of Transportation estimates that sign fabrication costs for a single sign, four feet by eight feet, come to about \$450 (at \$14 per square foot). Installation costs between \$1,200 and \$1,800 for each sign of that size, for a total cost of between \$3,300 and \$4,500 to both fabricate and install the customary two signs. (See the House Legislative Analysis Section analysis of House Bill 5050 dated 11-3-99.)

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

Fiscal information is not available.

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Congressional medal of honor recipients are especially deserving of public recognition, and, reportedly, two such recipients reside in Monroe County. Therefore it seems particularly fitting to publicly recognize them and other Michigan recipients of the medal of honor by naming the portion of I-75 in Monroe County for them. Moreover, the bill would conform to proposed Department of Transportation regulations for memorial signs by requiring that sufficient private contributions be received to pay the cost of erecting these signs.

#### ***Response:***

Since all of the Michigan portion of interstate highway 75 already is named "the American Legion Memorial Highway," in order to name a portion of the highway after Michigan recipients of the Congressional medal of honor without changing I-75's current designation, the bill would have to name this portion of I-75 "the Medal of Honor Recipient and American Legion Memorial Highway." This seems a rather awkward, long designation, and one that certainly would be hard to read by motorists driving on this portion of I-75. Why not just pick out a state highway that doesn't already

would be less confusing than adding another veterans' group name to part of a highway already named after another veterans' group.

#### ***Against:***

The naming of state or interstate highways after veterans' groups, while well-intentioned and popular with veterans' groups, has been done haphazardly and in a way that sometimes has resulted in the multiple naming of highways (or portions of highways) that already have been memorialized in honor of some other group (sometimes including, as in the present case, some other veterans' group) or person. This really seems to do little to truly honor veterans, who might be better served by, for example, increasing tangible benefits to veterans and their families with regard to health, retirement, or educational benefits. Or, if public memorialization is deemed most appropriate and cost-effective, rather than add to the existing confusion of highway memorial naming, why not direct memorialization efforts to a state memorial to veterans, or some such other kind of non-highway memorial that people could visit specifically to pay their respects to the sacrifices made by veterans and their families on behalf of the state and the nation?

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Department of Transportation is not opposed to the bill. (11-18-99)

Analyst: S. Ekstrom

memorialize a veterans' group, and name it after Congressional medal of honor recipients? Surely this

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