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SIDNEY OUWINGA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY; VETERANS' MEMORIAL HIGHWAYS

**House Bill 5421 as enrolled
Public Act 174 of 2000
Second Analysis (6-13-00)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Rick Johnson
House Committee: Transportation
Senate Committee: Transportation and
Tourism**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Sidney Ouwinga served with great distinction as a State Representative of the 18th Representative District in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1982 until his untimely death in July 1991. During his nine years as an elected state officeholder, Mr. Ouwinga served as minority vice-chairman of the House Transportation Committee, and a member of the Agriculture Committee, the Forestry and Minerals Committee, and the Towns and Counties Committee.

Sidney Ouwinga began his career in local government service by succeeding his father in a township supervisor's post, and their joint career spanned 32 years. After leaving township government, Mr. Ouwinga served as a member of the Osceola County Board of Commissioners from 1972 to 1982, chairing the county commission for seven years during his decade of service. While a county commissioner, he served for five years as chairman of the Northern Michigan Association of Counties, and then from 1977 to 1982 as a member of the board of directors for the Michigan Association of Counties, his last year of that term as president of the organization.

Mr. Ouwinga represented the state of Michigan on the steering committee of the National Association of County Transportation Officials for four years. Further, he was instrumental in the decision to locate and build U.S. 131 in western Michigan, working tirelessly as a member of the U.S. 131 Association, which monitored progress on the construction of the highway section by section.

To recognize his career of public service which spanned more than two decades, the citizens of his community would like to honor Sidney Ouwinga by naming a portion of a highway after him.

In a related matter, veterans of the armed services have made sacrifices for the American people and for democratic ideals, so that Americans may live, work, and play in the way few citizens of the world are able. The sacrifices made by veterans should remain prominent in the collective memory of the nation, and veterans who have acted in the nation's behalf should be held in high esteem.

In order to pay tribute to those who have fought and sometimes died to uphold American values, and also to help young Americans remain mindful of the tragic consequences of war and the need to pursue peace, many communities have designated a portion of their street scape to honor veterans.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5421 would create a new act to designate the part of the bypass of highway U.S.-131 that is located between highway M-115 and Boon road in Wexford county as the "Sidney Ouwinga Memorial Bypass".

The bill also would designate the part of highway M-32 located between Ripley boulevard and Bagley street in the city of Alpena as "Veterans' Memorial Highway."

Finally, the bill would designate the part of highway M-33 that is located in Ogemaw and Oscoda counties between Houghton Creek road and Miller road as the "Veterans' Memorial Drive."

The bill would require the state transportation department to erect suitable markers only at the approach of the highway indicating its name when sufficient private contributions were received to completely cover the cost of erecting the markers.

House Bill 5421 (6-13-00)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Sidney Ouwinga was born in Marion, Michigan on August 24, 1927. He attended the Highland Christian School, a two-room schoolhouse having eight grades and located in Highland Township. His father operated a general merchandise store in the community, and young Sidney made the store's customer deliveries beginning at age 12, serving those in the community who were without transportation. Mr. Ouwinga also worked as a potato farmer before entering public service.

On April 14, 1950, Mr. Ouwinga married his wife Marilyn. He is survived by his wife, their daughter Kathy Sue, and their sons Carl Thomas, Dale John, and Robert.

Mr. Ouwinga was a member of the Christian Reformed Church, the Republican Party, and the Farm Bureau Association.

Related legislation. House Bill 5264, currently pending before the House, contains identical language with regard to designating part of M-33 in Ogemaw and Oscoda counties as "Veterans' Memorial Drive."

Community petition in Ogemaw and Oscoda counties. Those who spearheaded the effort to designate a Veterans' Memorial Drive in Ogemaw and Oscoda counties are themselves veterans of World War II. They presented the Transportation Committee of the House of Representatives with petitions supporting the designation signed by more 100 people who live along the roadway.

The portion of highway that would be designated by this legislation to memorialize veterans begins near Rose City in Ogemaw county, and extends nearly to Fairview in Oscoda County. According to committee testimony, this roadway links the districts of two state representatives (the 103rd district and the 105th districts), and also the districts of two state senators (the 34th and 37th Michigan Senate districts).

Veterans' 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 199 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

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:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that House Bill 5421 would have no impact on state or local costs or revenues. (3-7-00)

With regard to House Bill 5264, a bill now incorporated into this legislation to designate the portion of M-33 as Veterans Memorial Drive, the HFA has also reported that there would be no fiscal impact. (2-28-00)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

This tribute to Representative Ouwinga is particularly fitting, because of his dedication to transportation issues, especially in the northern and western regions of the state, including the Upper Peninsula. Representative Ouwinga served as vice-chairman of the Michigan House of Representatives committee that addressed transportation issues, and while a county commissioner worked to monitor construction of U.S. 131 as a member of the U.S. 131 Association. He also represented Michigan on a federal steering committee of county transportation officials.

It has been said of Representative Ouwinga that “he had a heart as big as all outdoors,” and that he was “simply the best”. His many friends relate that Representative Sid Ouwinga espoused a political philosophy that held friendship, family values, and

personal freedom in high regard. It is fitting, then, to recognize a man so able and so widely respected, both by his constituents in the five counties of the 18th District, and by all who served with him in local and state government.

For:

To memorialize veterans by designating a portion of the highway system in their honor is a visible way for citizens within a community to testify to each other, and also to those who visit, that service and commitment to others, and to ideals, are clearly valued. Veterans of military service have expressed concern that young people seem to have no understanding of wartime sacrifice. This legislation provides an opportunity to promote that understanding.

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ 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.