



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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**THE D. H. DAY HIGHWAY IN
LEELANAU COUNTY**

**House Bill 4235 as introduced
First Analysis (3-22-01)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Jason Allen
Committee: Transportation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

David Henry Day was a prominent Leelanau County businessman who tirelessly promoted business and civic development in the county. Born in 1858 in New York state, Mr. Day moved to the Midwest at the age of 21, settling in Glen Haven, Michigan in 1878, where he lived until his death in 1928, when his obituary in the Traverse City *Record Eagle* referred to him as "King David of the North." Throughout his adult life in Michigan, Mr. Day engaged in varied successful business and civic activities that benefited his community, the surrounding area, and even the whole state through his work as state park commissioner.

Mr. Day owned and operated a hardwood lumber mill at Glen Lake, which was supplied with logs from his own and neighboring farmers' lands. (In fact, his own second-growth forest of oak, ash, cherry, birch, and maple reportedly was so well-managed that it was used by government researchers of the time.) He was vice president of the National Hardwood Lumber Association, and one of the promoters - and the first president - of the Northern Michigan Hardwood Lumber Manufacturers' Association. Along with his lumbering interests, Mr. Day also served for many years as the first chairman of the state park commission (one of several commissions and boards -- including the public domain commission, the state game, fish and forest fire commission, the state board of fish commissioners, and the board of geological survey -- that was consolidated into the Department of Conservation in 1921), and donated a valuable tract of land near Glen Arbor that eventually became the D. H. Day Campground in what is now the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. (According to the Department of Natural Resources, Interlochen State Park was the first official state park.)

In addition to his lumbering interests, however, Mr. Day also had mercantile and agricultural interests. He owned and operated both a well-regarded general store in Glen Haven and a 400-acre farm where he set out 5,000 cherry trees and carried out the breeding of pure-

bred Holstein cattle, owning a herd of between 75 and 100 cattle, including a famous bull named Alcarto King Sevis.

Mr. Day also is known for his active promotion of the building and improvement of roads in Leelanau County, holding the office of "overseer of highways," and planning, supervising, and paying for the actual construction of the road from Glen Haven to Empire, which later became part of M-22. In 1915, the president of the Michigan State Good Roads Association reportedly called Day "one of the greatest Good Roads boosters in all Michigan," at least in part due to his contributions of time and money to the West Michigan Pike Association and his promotion of the "Straits to Gulf" Dixie Highway that did so much to promote tourism in the northwestern Lower Peninsula in the early 1900s.

But his interests in development and civic improvement extended even further than just promoting good roads and tourism. He was instrumental in building the telegraph line from Glen Haven to Leland and in the placement of the life-saving station at Sleeping Bear Point, and was responsible for laying the cable from the life-saving station from Sleeping Bear Point to South Manitou Island. He also was president of the Western Michigan Development Bureau, which later became the Michigan Tourist and Resort Association. In recognition of his service to his community, he also was appointed postmaster of Glen Haven.

In light of all of his civic and development contributions, especially to the northwestern part of the Lower Peninsula, the local chamber of commerce proposed to then-Governor Fred Green (governor from 1927 to 1930) that the six miles of Michigan Highway 22 north of Empire to Glen Arbor be named in honor of D. H. Day. Although the governor apparently wrote back indicating a favorable discussion with the then-Department of Highways, no action ever was taken.

House Bill 4235 (3-22-01)

Legislation has been introduced that again proposes naming a portion of a highway in Leelanau County after Mr. Day.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to designate highway M-109 located in Leelanau county as the “D. H. Day Highway”. The bill would require the Department of Transportation to erect suitable markers at the approach of the highway to indicate its name when sufficient private collections were received to completely cover the cost of the markers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Reportedly, although in 1928 Governor Green had been prepared to designate the portion of M-22 from Empire to Glen Arbor that crosses the Glen Lakes “narrows” bridge, the family of D H. Day prefers that a 5-mile portion of M-109 (from M-22, just north of Empire, to Glen Haven) that passes the cemetery where Mr. Day is buried be the designated section of the highway. Reportedly, that is the segment that Mr. Day successfully fought to have the state build, though word of the state’s decision apparently reached Mr. Day just before he died and the highway itself was not built until some years after his death in 1928.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill would have no state or local fiscal impact. (3-16-01)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

David Henry Day was an extraordinary man who, both as a businessman and as a community member, did much to develop Leelanau County economically and in terms of such basic infrastructure needs as roads and marine safety. As his obituary in the *Traverse City Record Eagle* and the biographies of him in *Sprague’s History of Grand Traverse and Leelanaw Counties* and in *Historic Michigan* indicate, he was greatly admired by his contemporaries for his personal, civic, and business qualities. In the late 1920s, then-Governor Green apparently thought it was a good idea to name the road through the then-D. H. Day State Park at Glen Haven (which later was absorbed into the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore) after D. H. Day, but nothing ever was put into place. In light of Mr. Day’s many contributions to this part of the state, it is only fitting and proper that a part of the road which he worked so

hard to have the state build (and which passes near the cemetery where he is buried) be named after him. Naming part of M-109 after Mr. Day, moreover, would provide the opportunity for people to learn about an important part of state history.

POSITIONS:

The Leelanau County Board of Road Commissioners passed a resolution on October 3, 2000 in support of the bill. (3-21-01)

The Glen Arbor Township supervisor has offered written testimony to support the bill. (3-21-01)

Analyst: S. Ekstrom/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.