

CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL DAY

Senate Bill 224 as passed by the Senate
First Analysis (10-20-03)

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Goschka
House Committee: Government
Operations
Senate Committee: Local, Urban and
State Affairs

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Some people believe that the state should give special recognition to children who have died. For several years, the Child Welfare League of America has urged the states to fly the Children's Memorial Day flag or proclaim Children's Memorial Flag day, on the fourth Friday in April. (The flag depicts linked silhouettes of children, with one missing from the chain.) The League states that attention should be called to the high number of preventable deaths of children in the United States. In 2003, all 50 states responded to the request. Governor Granholm proclaimed April 25, 2003, as Children's Memorial Flag Day in Michigan and encouraged citizens to "...honor the thousands of children across the country who die violently each year." It has been suggested that the state statutorily establish the fourth Friday in April as "Children's Memorial Day", in honor of all children who have died each year. [The information in this analysis is derived from the Senate Fiscal Agency's analysis dated 10-1-03.]

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to establish the fourth Friday in April each year as "Children's Memorial Day" in the State, and encourage individuals, educational institutions, and social, community, religious, labor, and business organizations to pause on Children's Memorial Day and "reflect upon the precious resource that our children constitute and the great loss we suffer when we lose our children".

The bill contains the following statement: "The legislature recognizes the great number of tragic deaths of children of all ages from all causes that occur each year. Each day in America many children and youths under age 20 commit suicide, are victims of a homicide, or die as a result of accidents. Many more children die from illness. In commemoration of this terrible toll, the legislature declares that the fourth Friday in April of each year shall be known as 'Children's Memorial Day'."

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:

The House Committee on Government Operations reported the bill without amendment.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The bill would have no fiscal impact on state or local government, according to the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies. (HFA analysis dated 10-13-03 and SFA analysis dated 10-1-03)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

For the past few years, the Child Welfare League has promoted the fourth Friday in April as Children's Memorial Flag Day, to bring attention to the high number of preventable, and often violent deaths that involve children. States have responded by displaying the Children's Memorial Flag or by issuing proclamations. The State of Michigan could take this effort a step further by permanently declaring the fourth Friday in April as "Children's Memorial Day", to encourage educational, social, and business institutions to honor children who have died for any reason. In addition to heightening public awareness of the great need to be vigilant in protecting children, the bill would provide a way for the state and its residents to pay respects to the families of those who have lost children.

POSITIONS:

There are no positions at present.

Analyst: C. Couch

■ 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.