

Legislative Analysis



VETERAN STATUS ON DRIVER LICENSE

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House Bill 4127 (Substitute H-1)

Sponsor: Rep. Rick Jones

Committee: Military and Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security

First Analysis (2-23-09)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would allow individuals who are active members or veterans of the armed forces to obtain a special designation on the driver's license. The designation would be placed on a license at the request of the driver.

FISCAL IMPACT: House Bill 4127 would increase costs to the Secretary of State by an indeterminate amount. For further detail, see [Fiscal Information](#).

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Every veteran of the armed forces is issued a Department of Defense Form 214 (DD form 214) when he or she is honorably discharged. The DD Form 214 measures 8 1/2 by 11 inches and is often stored by the service member in a safe and secure but not easily accessible place. Many retailers, vendors, and community business owners offer discounts and benefits specific to service members, and proof of veteran status is sometimes requested. Veterans claim they experience denial of benefits without official military documents to verify their status. Legislation has been introduced to address this concern; it would permit service members to get a designation on the driver's license if they produce the DD form 214 for the Department of State.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to allow individuals who are active members or veterans of the armed forces to get a designation on the driver's license. The designation would be in a style and format considered appropriate by the Secretary of State and could designate the military branch. The Secretary of State would have to require proof of the individual's veteran status by the showing of an U.S. Department of Defense *Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty* before providing the designation.

MCL 257.310

FISCAL INFORMATION:

House Bill 4127 would increase the costs of the Secretary of State by an indeterminate amount. The designation would require additional computer and software programming, which the department indicates could result in substantial costs. In addition, the

department would have increased administrative costs stemming from the bill's requirement that the Secretary of State verify that the individual provide sufficient proof of veteran status. The amount of the fiscal impact to the State would depend upon a variety of factors, including how much the programming costs would be and how many veterans would request the designation on their driver's licenses.

As introduced, the bill does not require the individual requesting the designation to pay a fee, which means any additional expenses would be the responsibility of the State.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Reportedly, over 700 organizations provide benefits on Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, and Flag Day to veterans when they purchase items at the point of sale with proper identification. The bill would provide an armed forces designation on the driver's license so as to eliminate the need for service members to carry official "paperwork" on their person when they need to establish veteran status for a variety of purposes.

Against:

A military designation on a driver's license is not necessary. Although it may be convenient for veterans to have a military insignia on a driver's license, a driver's license is an official government document issued for specific purposes and one that law enforcement personnel need to be able to read uncluttered. Passage of the bill will lead to the license being used for a variety of purposes by a variety of groups, all unrelated to the official purposes of the driver's license. Also, such additions to government-issued identification result in an unnecessary state expense.

POSITIONS:

The American Legion, Marine Corps League, and Commanders Group all testified in support of the bill. (2-18-09)

The Military Order of the Purple Heart supports the bill. (2-18-09)

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs support the bill. (2-18-09)

The Department of State testified that it does not support the bill. (2-18-09)

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