



Senate Fiscal Agency  
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## BILL ANALYSIS



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House Bill 5009 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Representative Jacob Hoogendyk  
House Committee: Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security  
Senate Committee: Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs

Date Completed: 2-6-04

### **RATIONALE**

There is some concern about the required membership of county veterans' affairs committees. Under Public Act 192 of 1953, a county board of commissioners may create a county department of veterans' affairs and appoint a committee to administer the department. The department assists veterans in determining eligibility for emergency funds and other public assistance. Funds may be available, for example, under Public Act 214 of 1899, which requires each county board of commissioners to levy and collect an annual property tax of up to .10 mill in order to create a fund for the relief of honorably discharged indigent members of the armed forces and their dependents.

Before 1996, Public Act 192 required that a county veterans' committee consist of four members, whose positions were to be filled by veterans who had served honorably on active duty in each of the two World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam conflict. If a World War I veteran who was able and willing to serve could not be found, the position could be filled by a veteran of any other war or conflict. Public Act 108 of 1996 amended Public Act 192 to remove references to veterans of particular wars relative to committee membership, and to give counties some flexibility in the size of the committee. Under the 1996 revisions, a committee may have three, four, or five members and each member must represent a different war or conflict.

Some counties are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the requirement that not more than one committee member represent a single war or conflict, because of the aging and death of World War II veterans, the youngest of whom are now in their late 70s

and early 80s. Some people believe that a county veterans' committee should be allowed to have two members who represent the same war or conflict.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend Public Act 192 of 1953 to allow up to two members of a county's veterans' affairs committee to be representative of a single war or conflict. Currently, not more than one member may represent a single war or conflict.

In addition, under the Act, the veterans appointed to the committee must be county residents "who have served honorably on active duty in the armed forces as volunteers or regulars or women marines, or who served actively in a war in which the United States has been, is, or may hereafter be a participant...including the conflict in Vietnam". Under the bill, committee members would have to be county residents "who have served honorably on active duty in the United States armed forces or who served actively in the United States armed forces in a war or received an armed forces campaign or service medal".

MCL 35.621

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

Some counties apparently are having difficulty finding veterans of enough wars to round out their veterans' affairs committees. World War

II ended almost 60 years ago, meaning veterans of that war are dying in increasingly greater numbers, and the surviving veterans of World War II are at least in their late 70s and may not be as willing or able to serve as they have been in the past. In addition, veterans of more recent conflicts such as the Persian Gulf War and the current campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq tend to be younger and typically are establishing families and careers, so they often are not interested in serving on veterans' affairs committees at this time. Also, those recent military actions have added to the number of veterans and dependents in need of services, making the work of the county departments and committees all the more crucial.

According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs, veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars most often are drawn upon to fill the committee positions. Since Public Act 192 requires a committee to have at least three members and prohibits representation of a single war by more than one member, the committee cannot consist of veterans representing just the Korean and Vietnam wars. By allowing a county's veterans' affairs committee to have two members who represent the same war or conflict, the bill would afford counties a better opportunity appoint veterans to these important committees.

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: David Zin

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.