

Senate Fiscal Agency  
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**SFA**



**BILL ANALYSIS**

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House Bill 4646 (Substitute S-1 as reported)  
Sponsor: Representative Bob Brown  
House Committee: Senior Citizens and Veterans' Affairs  
Senate Committee: Human Resources, Labor and Veterans Affairs

Date Completed: 10-13-97

### **RATIONALE**

On January 1, 1997, Section 505 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 changed the date set as the beginning of the Vietnam era in Federal law from August 5, 1964 to February 28, 1961. This date reflects the arrival of the first American troops in Vietnam. The Federal change in the starting date of the Vietnam era applies only to those people who were actually serving in Vietnam during the time period. Since Federal law has moved back the official date for the beginning of the Vietnam era, it has been suggested that State law should coincide with the date.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend Public Act 190 of 1965 (which provides for the uniform service dates for veterans) to redefine the beginning of the Vietnam era as February 28, 1961.

Currently, the Act defines the Vietnam era as the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending May 7, 1975. "Veteran" means a person, who has served in the active military service forces, during a period of war or who has received the armed forces expeditionary or other campaign service medal during an emergency condition and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions. It also includes a person who has died in active military service.

MCL 35.61

### **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**

For the sake of administrative simplicity, many

people believe Federal and State law should coincide with each other. The proposed starting date of the Vietnam era, February 28, 1961, would apply only to those soldiers who were actually serving in Vietnam during the time period. Since the dates determine eligibility for certain types of veterans' benefits, it is important for State and Federal law to be consistent.

#### **Opposing Argument**

Some people believe the Vietnam era should begin on October 25, 1956, to correspond with the date the first full unit of soldiers reportedly was sent to Vietnam.

**Response:** The first full unit of soldiers sent to Vietnam on October 25, 1956, was not ordered into combat. It is not clear if these soldiers were even armed. If the soldiers were not engaged in active military service, then they could not be considered a "veteran" under the Act.

Legislative Analyst: N. Nagata

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have a minimal fiscal impact on State and local government. Expanding the time-frame in Michigan statute in which a Michigan veteran is termed a Vietnam era war veteran as the bill proposes to do would bring the State in line with current U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (V.A.) definitions.

Michigan veterans defined as "wartime veterans" are eligible to apply for emergency grants from the Michigan Veteran's Trust Fund and for admission to the Grand Rapids and D.J. Jacobetti State veteran's facility. These programs already honor the V.A.'s definition for Vietnam era veterans and therefore the bill would have little fiscal impact on

existing State programs for veterans.

The bill also would have a minimal fiscal impact on county governments, which are required under the Soldier's Relief Commission Act to provide burial costs for needy wartime veterans.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Baker

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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.