



Senate Fiscal Agency
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Senate Bill 93 (as enrolled)
Sponsor: Senator Coleman Young II
Senate Committee: Transportation
House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

Date Completed: 1-13-15

RATIONALE

The Michigan Memorial Highway Act provides for the naming of highways in this State. Many of the highways have been named after police officers or soldiers killed in the line of duty, or noted community or historical figures. Accordingly, it has been suggested that a highway in Wayne County be named after a Civil War regiment that consisted of black men, as a tribute to their service during that war.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Memorial Highway Act to designate the portion of Highway I-375 that is within Wayne County as the "102nd United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) Memorial Highway".

Proposed MCL 250.1090

BACKGROUND

In the early days of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln issued calls for volunteers to enlist; most of those who enlisted were white. Black men who went to recruiting stations were discouraged or prohibited from volunteering for service.¹ By 1862, however, attitudes began to change as the human and economic costs of the war continued to mount. Throughout 1863, Henry Barns, the editor of the *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune* and an abolitionist, directed efforts to organize a regiment of black troops in Michigan.² In August of that year, he was given authorization to raise such a regiment. Recruiting began immediately at Camp Ward in Detroit, but proceeded more slowly than expected for several reasons: other states enticed soldiers to enlist in their regiments, the housing conditions at Camp Ward were poor, and there was significant discrimination in voting rights, citizenship, and pay.³

Near the end of 1863, the newly formed 1st Michigan made a railroad tour throughout southern Michigan. The troops were praised but, upon their return, the poor conditions at the Camp Ward barracks and altercations with Detroit civilians continued.⁴ In February 1864, the regiment was mustered into Federal service and sent to Annapolis, Maryland. From there, the 1st Michigan was moved to Hilton Head, North Carolina, where its designation was changed to the 102nd United States Colored Troops, and command was transferred from the State of Michigan to the Federal

¹ Hondon Hargrove, "Their Greatest Battle Was Getting Into the Fight", *Michigan History Magazine*, p. 25, January/February 1991.

² *Id.* at 26.

³ *Id.* at 26-27. Pay for a white soldier during the Civil War was \$13 per month. Black soldiers were paid \$10, with a \$3 deduction per month for clothing. Officers of black units were paid the same as their white counterparts.

⁴ *Id.* 28-29.

Bureau for Colored Troops.⁵ Over the next 13 months, the 102nd conducted combat operations, picket duty, and fatigue duty in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.⁶ Various detachments of the 102nd were engaged in heavy fighting and performed well. By the end of April 1865, the 102nd had seen the last of combat for the war and spent the next several months on occupation duty.⁷ Of the 1,673 men who served with the 102nd, 130 died: 118 from disease, seven from wounds, and five in action.⁸ The regiment was mustered out of Federal service on September 30, and was disbanded in Detroit on October 17, 1865.⁹

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

The bill would be a tribute to those who served this State and the United States during the Civil War while contending with prevalent racial discrimination during the 1800s. The bill would have significance to the area when the highway would be named because at least 11 of the soldiers who served in this unit are buried at Elmwood Cemetery in Detroit.

Legislative Analyst: Jeff Mann

FISCAL IMPACT

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

Fiscal Analyst: Glenn Steffens

⁵ Hargrove, n. 1 at 29.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ See "Battle Unit Details", U.S. National Park Service, retrieved 10-9-2014 at: <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=UUS0102RI00C>.

⁸ Hargrove, n. 1 at 30.

⁹ *Id.* at 30.

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