



**Senate Fiscal Agency**  
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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 1177 (as enacted) **PUBLIC ACT 629 of 2018**  
Sponsor: Senator Margaret E. O'Brien  
Senate Committee: Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security

House Committee: Military and Veterans Affairs

Date Completed: 3-4-19

### **RATIONALE**

In 1866, the first post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), which was the largest veterans' organization for Union soldiers in the immediate postbellum period, was formed. By 1890, the GAR consisted of more than 400,000 members and had thousands of posts in former Union states. Each GAR post or department was responsible for maintaining its own files, and in 1897, the Michigan Legislature established a room in the Capitol Building for these records and for the Director of the GAR. The GAR is long-defunct in Michigan, and the national office formally closed in 1956.

After the closure, the records and files contained in the GAR room of the Capitol were transferred to the State Historical Commission. A plaque now memorializes the specific location of the former GAR room, and the State Capitol still honors the service of Michigan's Civil War veterans with the replica battle flags hanging in the rotunda. Because of this history of honoring veterans in the Capitol Building, it has become a place for veterans and families to pay their respects to those who served. It has been suggested that other plaques honoring the service of Michigan residents in the United States Armed Forces should be placed in the Capitol.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill amends Public Act 8 of 1897, which provides headquarters for Michigan veterans in the Capitol Building in Lansing, to do the following:**

- Eliminate requirements for the State Board of Auditors to set apart a room in the Capitol Building at Lansing to be used as the Michigan veterans' headquarters, and for the Governor to appoint a custodian for that room.**
- Require the Michigan's State Capitol Commission to display one or more plaques commemorating the services of Michigan residents in the United States armed Forces and the Michigan National Guard.**

The bill will take effect on March 28, 2019.

Under the Act, the Board of State Auditors must set apart a suitable furnished room in the Capitol Building in Lansing as the Michigan veterans headquarters to be located in the headquarters room of the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Michigan. The room must be given care and attention as is given to other office rooms in the building, and must be under the charge of a custodian, who must be a veteran of World War I or World War II, appointed by the Governor. The custodian of the Michigan veterans' headquarters must receive such compensation as appropriated by the Legislature, and is authorized to incur such expenses as is necessary. Annually, on or before

July 1 of each year, the custodian must issue a report to the Governor of the Michigan veterans' headquarter's activities during the preceding year.

The Act requires the room to be used for storing supplies and property, arranging and keeping the records and history of veterans of World War I or World War II, and for conducting general office business. The records must be accessible under suitable rules and regulations established by the custodian.

The bill deletes all of these provisions. Under the bill, the Michigan State Capitol Commission must provide, within the State Capitol Building, recognition for the contributions of veterans to the State. Specifically, the Commission must display within the Capitol Building, one or more plaques commemorating the Grand Army of the Republic and the services of Michigan residents in the United States Armed Forces and the Michigan National Guard.

"Veteran" means that term as defined in Section 1 of Public Act 190 of 1965: an individual who served in the United States Armed Forces, including the reserve components, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, including an individual who died while on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

MCL 35.231 & 35.232

### **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**

Many believe that in some respects the Michigan Capitol was built to honor Michigan veterans. The trying times of the American Civil War coincided with the construction of the United States Capitol Building, which many Michigan soldiers saw while they were away fighting for the Union. The grandeur of the U.S. Capitol Building represented for them the perseverance of the nation. Ultimately, many of these soldiers came to believe that American public buildings should replicate this national symbol. Elijah Meyers used the dome and two wing design of the U.S. Capitol Building when he designed the Michigan Capitol Building.

Also, many of the monuments on the grounds of the Capitol Building commemorate Michigan's veterans. The statue of Austin Blair, the First Michigan Sharpshooters Monument, the two replica Civil War cannons, the Grand Army Republic Memorial, the Hiker Monument, the Engineers and Mechanics Monument, and the Veterans Memorial all symbolize the bravery and selflessness of Michigan veterans, with the purpose of honoring their services. With this in mind, honoring veterans with other plaques in the Capitol Building is appropriate.

Legislative Analyst: Tyler VanHuysse

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill will have no fiscal impact on State or local government

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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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.