



**INGHAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS**  
**HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING**  
5303 S. Cedar St., Lansing, MI 48911  
Phone: (517) 887 4331

October 23, 2015

Representative Sam Singh  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE House Bill No. 4970 – proposed amendment to PA 192 of 1953

The Ingham County Department of Veteran Affairs Committee would like to go on record in support of House bill No. 4970 which would amend PA 192 of 1953. Our committee strongly encourages the passage of this bill for a number of reasons:

- 1) Under the current legislation, a prospective committee member is required to get a letter of recommendation from a chartered veteran post within the local committee. This requirement essentially eliminates more than 75% of the veteran population from being considered for an appointment on the county veteran committee. In 2011 a workgroup was formed by Senators Moolenaar and Pappageorge in conjunction with SB 798 and SB 799. These bills address the makeup of the Committees for the Board of Trustees for the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund and the Committees for both Michigan Veterans Facilities. This workgroup reported that 25% of the Michigan Veteran population had membership in a Veteran Service Organization (but the percentage is actually lower based on multiple VSO memberships of an individual). A copy of this report is attached.
- 2) The current legislation is archaic in that many agencies within the community that assist local veterans are unable to recommend anyone for a position on the county committee because they do not represent a chartered veteran organization. For example, here in Ingham County the following organizations are extremely progressive in assisting veterans: Volunteers of America, Christo Rey, NAACP of Greater Lansing, Peckham Industries, Lansing Community College, Michigan State University, and the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency to name a few. Yet those in leadership positions from these organizations carry no weight when it comes to recommending a veteran to the County Board of Commissioners for a position on the county committee.
- 3) There is an unintended consequence with respect to the current requirement of a letter of recommendation from a post from a chartered veteran organization. The current law makes it harder for minority veterans to be appointed on a local county committee. Minority veteran representation at local posts of chartered veteran is

well below the percentage of minority veterans within the community. As a result, getting minority representation on the Ingham County Committee has become problematic.

The proposed legislation would not take away from the local chartered veteran post from recommending veterans to serve on the committee. The biggest change and the reasoning for this committee's recommendation of this proposed legislation is that it will open up all of the communities' veterans to serve on the county committee without having to jump through any unnecessary hoops. This proposed legislation is long overdue.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Smith

Chairperson, Ingham County Department of Veteran Affairs Committee



Larry VanOstran

Committee Member, Ingham County Department of Veteran Affairs Committee



Donald Caswell

Committee Member, Ingham County Department of Veteran Affairs Committee



Kurt Kehoe

Committee Member, Ingham County Department of Veteran Affairs Committee

**SB 798 and SB 799**

Additional information subsequent to Senate Committee Hearing 11/8/2011

- The active membership for Michigan's Veteran Service Organizations are:

VSO – (1-Each) Position on Boards	MI - Membership
<i>American Legion</i>	68,533
<i>Disabled American Veterans</i>	26,793
<i>Veterans of Foreign Wars</i>	56,108
<b>Total</b>	<b>151,434*</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> VSO Position on Boards</b> (Selection of 1 from this group)	
<i>AMVETS</i>	8,562
<i>Vietnam Veterans of America</i>	4,212
<i>Non-Commissioned Officers Assoc.</i>	2,800
<i>Military Order of the Purple Heart</i>	2,187
<i>Marine Corp League</i>	2,116
<i>Polish Legion of American Veterans</i>	1,200
<i>Catholic War Veterans</i>	510
<i>MI Paralyzed Veterans of America</i>	497
<i>Jewish War Veterans</i>	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,084*</b>

- \*Many veterans are members of more than one VSO and therefore are counted by each VSO (creating duplicate numbers) in the total membership provided.
- Michigan's total Veterans' population is 703,000 with total VSO membership (173,518) representing 25% (but the percentage is actually lower based on multiple VSO memberships of an individual).
- Michigan's total Vietnam/Vietnam-Era population is 250,000 or 36% of the total state veteran population of 703,000.
- The three largest VSOs' provided their membership of Vietnam/Vietnam Era Veterans:
  - American Legion – 72% or 49,637
  - Disabled American Veterans – 50% or 13,300
  - Veterans of Foreign Wars – 87% or 48,814
  - **Combined representation (including duplicates) is 46% (111,751/250,000)**
- Vietnam Veterans of America represents less than 2% (4,212/250,000)
- Homes for Veterans' Board has 5 of 7 & MVTF Board has 7 of 7 Vietnam/Vietnam Era Representatives – there are NO representatives on these Boards of the last 20+ years of war (from 1990 through 2011). "Independents" (3 each Board) may change this.

## SB 798 and SB 799

Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security Committee  
Tuesday, 11/8/2011

### Report from Workgroup formed by Senators Moolenaar and Pappageorge

The Workgroup consisted of representatives from the Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) Commander's Group Legislative Liaisons, Board of Managers for the two State Homes for Veterans, Board of Trustees Chairman and Director of the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF) and staff of the Senators. (Guest: Staff Liaison for Rep. Damrow)

The Workgroup was charged with reviewing PA 152 and PA 9 and recommending changes. The Workgroup recommends the changes presented in SB 798 & SB 799 that modernizes these two laws encompassing the appointment process, Board representation (county/district committees for PA 9-MVTF also) & other language:

- Each Board will have seven members of honorably discharged veterans and serve terms of three years. Additional language was added that promotes enhanced diversity of skill, work and life experience for Boards to govern in a visionary manner.
- Aligns Board Representatives with a combination of:
  - One Representative each of the Disabled American Veterans, American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars who will be listed as representing their VSO. (Retains some previously named VSOs - preserves history)
  - One Representative will be in a 4<sup>th</sup> VSO position and the following organizations will be able to submit candidates for consideration: AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, Marine Corp League, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Polish Legion of American Veterans, Non-Commissioned Officers Association, Jewish War Veterans, and Catholic War Veterans. This representative will be listed as representing their VSO. (Allows for other Veteran Service Organizations not previously afforded an opportunity to serve.)
  - Three positions on each Board will be independent veteran representatives. They will be listed as 'Independent Representatives' no matter if they are affiliated with a VSO. (Allows opportunity for Veterans to serve who are not members of Veteran Service Organizations.)
- Michigan's total veteran population is over 703,000. Less than 25% of the state's veterans are presently eligible for appointment.
- These legislative changes, if enacted, afford all veterans an opportunity to be on one of these two boards.
- Some language that was outdated or not used anymore was updated or deleted.