



Senate Fiscal Agency
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Senate Bill 788 (Substitute S-1 as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Sylvia Santana
Committee: Veterans and Emergency Services

Date Completed: 6-28-24

RATIONALE

The sacrifices and service of women veterans are often overlooked when compared to their counterparts who are men. According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Services, there are about 46,000 women veterans in Michigan who deserve recognition for their service within the United States Armed Forces. Testimony also indicates that 17 other states have commemorative plates celebrating women veterans. Some people believe that Michigan should join these other states by creating a "woman veteran" special registration plate to increase recognition for women veterans and their achievements.

CONTENT

The bill would add Section 803t to the Michigan Vehicle Code to allow a woman veteran to apply to the Secretary of State (SOS) for a "woman veteran" special registration plate. The bill also would prescribe a misdemeanor penalty for the wrongful use of the special registration plate.

Woman Veteran Special Registration Plate; Eligibility

Specifically, a woman who met either of the following requirements could apply to the SOS for a special registration plate that displayed an appropriate vignette preceding the registration numbers and had the words "woman veteran" inscribed beneath the registration numbers:

- Was a member of the Michigan National Guard, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, or any branch of the United States Armed Forces and was called to active duty during a declared war or an armed conflict in which the United States was a participant.
- Was a member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces, including reservists and National Guard, and had retired or been granted an honorable discharge from that branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Application Process

Application for a special registration plate would have to be on a form prescribed by the SOS and would have to be accompanied by any proof of the applicant meeting the requirements listed above that the SOS could require. The application for a special registration plate could not require a service fee under Section 804.¹

The special registration plate would expire on the birthday of the vehicle owner. The applicant would not be required to furnish the proof listed above for an application for renewal of the special registration plate.

¹ Generally, Section 804 of the Code requires a \$5 service fee to be paid with each application for each distinctive or commemorative plate to cover manufacturing and issuance costs.

Upon proper application, the SOS would have to issue one or more special registration plates for each applicant for use on a passenger vehicle. An individual who was disabled who applied for a special registration plate would have to be issued a tab for persons with disabilities as provided in Section 803f for the special registration plate.² The SOS would have to require the same proof that the applicant was a disabled person as required for issuing a permanent windshield placard under Section 675.³ A person issued one or more special registration plates would have to be assessed the applicable registration fee.

Penalties

The use of a special registration plate on a vehicle other than the vehicle for which the plate was issued, or by a person who did not qualify, would be a misdemeanor.

Proposed MCL 257.803t

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

Recognizing women veterans' contributions to the United States Armed Forces ensures their sacrifices are remembered, their achievements are honored, their legacies are promoted, and equality is advanced. It is important to shift cultural perceptions about women veterans in the military because veterans who are women are underrecognized despite doing the same jobs as veterans who are men, including seeing combat. According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Services, many women veterans with current veterans plates do not receive thanks for their service or will be assumed to have a husband in military service. These actions dismiss the equal role men and women play in the United States Armed Forces. Also, the United States Armed Forces have a long and honored tradition of women veterans. The first woman veteran is purported to be Deborah Samson, who disguised herself by the name of Robert Shurtleff and served in the Continental Army for 17 months during the Revolutionary War.⁴ A "woman veteran" license plate would serve to increase recognition of women veterans and promote inclusivity and equality.

Legislative Analyst: Alex Krabill

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill could create some costs for the Department of State to produce a new vehicle registration plate with a vignette for "Woman Veteran"; however, the costs should be absorbable within annual appropriations. There would be no service fee applied to this plate and the vehicle registration tax revenues would remain the same and be deposited into the Michigan Transportation Fund.

² Generally, Section 803f of the Code allows the SOS to issue a tab for persons with disabilities to a disabled person who has been issued a special registration plate. The tab must be an adhesive tab displaying the international wheelchair symbol or a similar symbol. The disabled person may attach the adhesive tab to the person's special registration plate.

³ Under Section 675, "disabled person" generally means a person who is determined by a physician licensed to practice in Michigan to have one or more specific physical characteristics, such as blindness, an inability to walk more than 200 feet without rest, and an inability to use one or both legs or feet and walk without assistance, among other like characteristics.

⁴ Debra Michals, Ph.D, National Women's History Museum, "Deborah Samson", January 2023.

Additionally, the bill could have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact and an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on State and local government. New misdemeanor arrests and convictions under the bill could increase resource demands on law enforcement, court systems, community supervision, and jails; however, it is unknown how many people would be prosecuted under provisions of the bill. Local jail costs vary by jurisdiction and thus costs for local governments would vary. Local revenue to local libraries could increase under the bill as any additional revenue from imposed fines would go to local libraries.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco, Jr.

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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.