



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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AFRICAN AMERICAN INTERAGENCY COUNCIL

House Bill 4405 with committee amendment
Sponsor: Rep. David Honigman

Senate Bill 198 with committee amendment
Sponsor: Sen. Phil Arthurs

First Analysis (5-10-89)
Committee: Civil Rights

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THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Although the state currently has commissions, offices, or councils representing the interests of various constituency groups such as native Americans, women, Spanish-speaking citizens, and handicappers, it does not have a commission or office specifically charged with the responsibility of addressing the wants and needs of the state's largest minority, African Americans. Some people contend that the problems faced by African Americans are disproportionate to their representation in the general community and warrant greater attention and responsiveness from both the public and private sectors, i.e., the kind of coordination and concentration of efforts to address the problems that some feel could be accomplished by a commission or office specifically charged with such a mission.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4405 and Senate Bill 198 would create the African American Affairs Interagency Council Act and the African American Affairs Commission Act, respectively, to serve the needs of African Americans in the state. Under the bills, "African American" would mean a person who had origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa; was identified by an employer in a federal employer information report as "black;" or was regarded in the community as having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Senate Bill 198 would create the Office of African American Affairs and a 15-member African American Affairs Commission in the Department of Civil Rights. The department would be required to furnish administrative services, secretarial and other staff, professional employees, and office space for the commission and the office.

African American Affairs Commission. The commission would be appointed within 60 days after the bill's effective date. The commission would exercise its powers and duties independently of the Civil Rights Commission, except for budget, procurement, and housekeeping functions. African American Affairs Commission members would be appointed by the governor — five from a list presented by the Senate Majority Leader and five from a list presented by the Speaker of the House — and would serve three-year staggered terms. Commission business would be subject to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

The commission would be required to do all of the following:

- Stimulate and encourage the study and review of the status of African Americans in the state;

- Develop a unified policy and plan of action to serve the needs of African Americans in the state;
- Advise the governor, the legislature, and the Office of African American Affairs on the coordination and administration of state programs serving African Americans;
- Make recommendations to the governor and legislature regarding changes in state programs, statutes, and policies;
- Advise the governor and legislature of the nature, magnitude, and priorities of the problems of African Americans in the state;
- Review and approve grants to be made from federal, state, or private funds that would be administered by the Office of African American Affairs;
- Review and advise the governor and the legislature on the state's policies concerning African American affairs;
- Secure appropriate recognition of African American accomplishments and contributions to the state;
- Review and approve the Office of African American Affairs' annual report;
- Make recommendations to the governor and legislature regarding methods of overcoming discrimination against African Americans in public and private employment and civil and political rights;
- Strengthen home life by directing attention to critical problems confronting African Americans in single parent households;
- Promote more effective methods for enabling African Americans to develop their skills, to continue their education, and to be trained in employment skills;
- Cooperate with and coordinate activities with the Indian Affairs Commission, the Commission on Spanish Speaking Affairs, and the Michigan Women's Commission;
- Monitor, evaluate, investigate, advocate, and initiate programs for the betterment of African Americans in the state;
- Promote African American entrepreneurship.

Office of African American Affairs. The director of the office would be selected by the African American Affairs Commission with the concurrence of the executive director of the Department of Civil Rights. The office would be required to do all of the following:

- Provide the commission with information concerning the problems of African Americans, and implement commission policy;
- Conduct studies and recommend solutions to the problems of African Americans in the areas of education, employment, civil rights, health, housing, senior citizens, and other related areas;
- Recommend to federal, state, and local governmental departments and agencies the creation of services and facilities as needed;

H.B. 4405 & S.B. 198 (5-10-89)

- Serve as a clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of information on African American affairs;
- Apply for and accept grants and gifts from governmental and private sources;
- Request the services of all state and local governmental departments and agencies to assure that African Americans had access to decision making bodies, the policies of which affect African Americans in this state;
- Cooperate with departments and agencies to aid in effectuating the purposes of the act; and
- Submit a full written report of its activities and recommendations each year to the governor, legislature, and various African American communities throughout the state.

House Bill 4405 would create the African American Affairs Interagency Council Act. Under the bill, an African American Affairs Interagency Council would be created in the Office of African American Affairs. The council would be required to coordinate and provide for the exchange of information on all programs relating to services for African Americans, and to assist the Office of African American Affairs and the African American Affairs Commission in the development of an annual report.

Under the bill, the council would consist of the following officials; or their designees: the directors of the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Social Services, Licensing and Regulation, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Corrections, Management and Budget, Commerce, State Police, and Labor; the superintendent of public instruction; the state treasurer; the state personnel director; the executive director of the Department of Civil Rights; the attorney general; the secretary of state; and the chairperson of the State Housing Development Authority.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Department of Civil Rights projects a cost to the state of \$500,000 for Senate Bill 198, and no cost for House Bill 4405. According to the House Fiscal Agency, however, the costs involved in the bills are difficult to estimate, since House Bill 4405 does not provide for per diem or travel expenses or state the number of meetings the members of the African American Affairs Interagency Council must attend and Senate Bill 198 requires that the Department of Civil Rights provide secretarial and professional employees to staff the office of African American Affairs and this staff may have to be hired on a contractual basis. (5-9-89)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

As the only minority group in this country brought here in slavery, African Americans have faced a greater abrogation of their rights and greater obstacles than other groups toward gaining equality. Reports in the media indicate a resurgence of racism in recent years, and blacks have higher unemployment rates, and more health, education and housing problems than other groups. Since government bears the responsibility for the plight of these people, it is only just that a special commission should be created in the heart of government to coordinate and focus efforts to address the wants and interests of this group.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Social Services supports the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Mental Health supports the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Civil Rights supports the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Commerce has no position on the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Education has no position on the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Civil Service has no position on the bills. (5-9-89)

The Department of Attorney General has no position on the bills. (5-9-89)