



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

Since 1968, the legislature has created special commissions to advocate for the concerns of women, native Americans, Spanish-speaking people, and the elderly. Although the Department of Civil Rights is generally perceived as a defender of the rights of blacks and other minority groups, some people believe that there is a need to create a commission charged with advocating and improving the condition of the black community, not merely defending their rights once discrimination has occurred.

***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would create the Black Affairs Commission Act to establish a Black Affairs Commission in the Department of Civil Rights. Under the bill, the commission would consist of one person appointed by the Speaker of the House, one person appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, and 17 members appointed by the governor, as follows:

Two members from each of the following would be appointed from a list of six candidates submitted by each:

- The Detroit Association of Black Organizations;
- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP);
- The National Urban League;
- Black ministers.

One member from each of the following would be appointed from a list of three candidates submitted by each:

- Black Greek Letter Organizations;
- The Wolverine Bar Association;
- The National Medical Association;
- The National Association of Black Accountants;
- The Michigan Alliance of Black Educators;
- The National Association of Black Journalists;
- community action agencies;
- The Negro Business and Professional Women Clubs;
- The Opportunities Industrialization Centers Incorporated (OIC).

Members of the commission would serve three-year terms and would receive reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of commission business. Commission business would be subject to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Under the bill, the commission would be required to do all of the following:

- a) Stimulate and encourage the study and review of the status of black Americans in the state.
- b) Recommend methods of overcoming discrimination against black Americans in the exercise of civil and political rights, and in employment.

**BLACK AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

**House Bill 4724 with committee amendments**  
**First Analysis (5-11-89)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Joseph Young, Jr.**  
**Committee: State Affairs**

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c) Study, devise and promote effective methods to provide black Americans with the means for skill development, job retraining, and educational advancement.

d) Commission or conduct surveys and studies as necessary or appropriate.

e) Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of black Americans to the state.

f) Cooperate with and coordinate activities with the Indian Affairs Commission, the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs, and the Michigan Women's Commission.

g) Monitor, evaluate, investigate, advocate, and initiate programs for the betterment of the black community in the state.

h) Monitor, evaluate, investigate and advocate all public and private programs that have a direct impact on the black communities in the areas of legislation, employment, education, housing, health, and the judicial system.

i) Appoint advisory committees in fields including education, social service, labor and employment, law enforcement, health, legal rights, family relations, and volunteer services.

j) Approve employees required to carry out assigned responsibilities in accordance with Civil Service regulations and within limitations provided by law, and prescribe their duties.

Under the bill, the commission could accept federal funds or private gifts or donations. The acceptance and use of federal funds, however, would not commit state funds and would not place any obligation on the legislature to continue the purpose for which the funds were made available. The commission would be required to submit an annual report to the governor, which would include recommendations based on its studies.

***BACKGROUND INFORMATION:***

Senate Bill 198, also pending before the House, would create a 15-member African American Affairs Commission in the Department of Civil Rights with similar functions as the commission proposed in House Bill 4724.

***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

According to the Department of Civil Rights, the bill would result in a cost of approximately \$500,000 per year. (5-10-89)

***ARGUMENTS:***

***For:***

The bill would create a commission charged with acting affirmatively on behalf of Michigan's black citizens, in critical areas such as the economic revitalization of Michigan, job retraining and education, civil and political rights, housing and health care. The Black Affairs

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Commission would further be charged with securing recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of blacks to Michigan's history and culture. The time has come for the legislature to recognize the unique needs of the black community, just as it has addressed the needs of women, native Americans, Spanish-speaking people, and the elderly.

***Against:***

The bill would create yet another layer of bureaucracy, with a concurrent budgetary demand. The existing special commissions began with small budgets and high ideals, too, but, according to some people, have grown into self-serving bureaucracies concerned mainly with their own continued existence. Instead of adding another commission, it is time to reexamine the need for these special interest concerns.

***POSITIONS:***

The Department of Civil Rights supports the bill. (5-10-89)