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## MATT MCNEELY BOULEVARD

### House Bill 4436 as introduced First Analysis (4-15-97)

**Sponsor: Rep. Ilona Varga**  
**Committee: Transportation**

#### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

Former Representative Matthew McNeely served for 22 years as the representative for what was then the third district in the House of Representatives. His term of service, which, given term limits, can no longer be equaled, ran from 1964 - 1986, including service as Speaker Pro-Tem for 18 of those years and as Associate Speaker for four years. In addition, McNeely was the first African-American to serve as Speaker Pro-Tem in the Michigan Legislature. Representative McNeely is held in high esteem by those who worked with him and continues his public service through a non-profit organization, the Neighborhood Foundation, which works with organizations and the Detroit Public Schools on crime and drug prevention. It has been proposed that renaming a portion of a roadway within his former district would be a well deserved tribute and would memorialize his long and distinguished career in the Michigan legislature.

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

The bill would specify that the part of M-85 located in the City of Detroit between Outer Drive and I-75 would also be known as "Matt McNeely Boulevard." The Department of Transportation would be required to provide for the erection of suitable markers indicating the alternative names of the highway.

#### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill would increase state costs by calling for the placement of two new signs indicating the alternative name of the roadway proposed by the bill. The cost of the signs are estimated at around \$500. (3-14-97)

#### **ARGUMENTS:**

##### **For:**

The bill would recognize Matthew McNeely's distinguished 22-year career as a member of the Michigan legislature, 18 years of which he served as Speaker Pro-Tem for the House of Representatives. The former representative was also the first African-American to serve as Speaker Pro-Tem and served in

that capacity longer than anyone else before or since. In addition, McNeely was one of the founders of the National Black Caucus of State Representatives and served as its first national president. He was also elected national president of the Conference of Insurance Legislators. Upon his retirement from the House of Representatives, he was given the title of "Speaker Pro-Tem Emeritus."

Having grown up poor in Millen, Georgia, Matt McNeely moved to Detroit, Michigan in 1938. He and his wife settled in southwest Detroit, an area that was undeveloped at that time. McNeely began his career of public service by taking part in community and civic work, initiating some of the clubs and community meetings that led to the forming of the Southwest Detroit Civic League. He was also an integral part of a number of other community organizations and it is in no small part through his efforts that today southwest Detroit is a thriving and growing community.

Matthew McNeely remains active in his community and in the Neighborhood Foundation, a non-profit organization he formed in 1986 that works with other organizations and the Detroit Public Schools on crime and drug prevention programs. Matthew McNeely's long and distinguished career, as well as his nature and personality, provide more than ample reason for the tribute suggested in the bill.

#### **POSITIONS:**

The Department of Transportation does not oppose the bill. (4-10-97)

Analyst: W. Flory

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

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