

**I-94; “94th COMBAT INFANTRY
DIVISION MEMORIAL HIGHWAY”**

**House Bill 5127 (Substitute H-1)
First Analysis (11-1-01)**

**Sponsor: Rep. John Stewart
Committee: Transportation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The 94th Combat Infantry Division served with General George S. Patton’s 3rd Army during World War II. The division gained the respect of soldiers everywhere when it moved 400 miles across France with the intent to cross the Rhine River into Germany and win the war. The division’s relentless offensive march was resisted by German soldiers throughout 209 days, from the division’s official landing in France on September 6, 1944 (although some troops landed at Utah Beach on September 8), continuing to its first entry into Germany in January 1945, and pressing forward with few interruptions in their battles until mid-March 1945. According to committee testimony, the division’s casualty rate was 74 percent. Following their long offensive march, the division assumed occupation duties that continued for six months beyond the end of the hostilities. During that time, 4,789 soldiers from the division were wounded, and 1,156 were killed in action. The division captured 26,638 enemy soldiers during the offensive. See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below.

According to committee testimony, five legislatures from some of the states through which a highway passes having the same numerical designation as the division—that is, those having either the two-digit interstate I-94 (such as Michigan and six other states), or those having three-digit spur routes or state highways (of which there are countless numbers)—have named portions of those highways in honor of the soldiers and officers of the 94th infantry division. Specifically, those who testified report that to date, tribute to the 94th Infantry has been paid by naming roadways in Connecticut, Colorado, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

The 94th Infantry Division was activated in Michigan on September 15, 1942 at Fort Custer in Battle Creek. It is especially fitting, then, that Michigan join other states to pay tribute to the soldiers from the division, by naming the portion of I-94 that is located in Battle Creek in their honor.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5127 would amend the Michigan Memorial Highway Act to name a portion of I-94 in Battle Creek as the “94th Combat Infantry Division Memorial Highway.” The bill specifies that the portion of highway I-94 at exit 92 and continuing east to the M-66 exit would be given that name.

MCL 250.1064

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

94th Infantry Division structural elements. The 94th Infantry Combat Division was a unit of several thousand United States soldiers comprising three infantry regiments, four field artillery battalions, four tank and tank destroyer battalions, two automatic weapons battalions, one engineer combat battalion, one medical battalion, a counter-intelligence corps detachment, one military police platoon, an ordnance maintenance company, a quartermaster company, a signal battalion, and other detachments. The 94th Combat Infantry Division was commanded by Major General Harry J. Maloney beginning in September 1942 (and subsequently by Brigadier General Louis Fortier in May 1945, and then Major General Allison Barnett in August 1945).

94th Infantry Division monument. A monument to commemorate the division, unveiled during a dedication ceremony held on April 23, 2001, is located near Sacrifice Field, an area at Fort Benning, Georgia, the headquarters for the United States Army infantry. The text panel of the monument explains that the 94th Combat Infantry Division originated at Fort Custer in Battle Creek, Michigan. The division was activated on September 15, 1942, took basic training in November at Camp Phillips, Kansas, completed maneuvers in August 1943 in Gallatin, Tennessee, and took further training on November 22, 1943 at Camp McCain, Mississippi. The division embarked for Europe from New York City on August 6, 1944, debarked in Greenock, Scotland on August 12, 1944, re-embarked for Europe on September 3,

1944 from Southampton, England, and landed in France on September 6, 1944 at St. Marie-du-Mont. [A combat narrative indicates that portions of the division landed at Utah Beach, France, on September 8, 1944.] The soldiers in the division began their long offensive in France that September, and first entered Germany on January 8, 1945. During the ensuing three months until mid-March they fought many bloody battles to secure territory, towns, and bridges in Germany. They participated in the campaigns of Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe, until the war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945. The 94th Division assumed occupation duties around Dusseldorf from the end of April to June 15, 1945 when the 3rd Army was deactivated, and then held occupation duties in Czechoslovakia until the end of November.

For more information about the 94th Infantry Division, visit the division web site at www.94thinfdiv.com.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the bill has no state or local fiscal impact, since Public Act 142 of 2001 requires that sufficient private funds be raised before the Department of Transportation places and maintains suitable signs to dedicate portions of any highway. (10-31-01)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

This bill allows the citizens of Michigan to express their appreciation for the courage of freedom fighters who served during World War II as members of the 94th Combat Infantry Division. Naming a well-traveled portion of the state's busy road system in their honor—a highway that bears the same numerical designation as the division, itself—gives to these veterans the public recognition they deserve. Indeed, this dedication is particularly appropriate because the 94th Infantry Division was activated at Fort Custer in Battle Creek, the city through which the roadway passes. In addition, this legislation allows Michigan to join the states of Connecticut, Colorado, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York whose legislatures already have named parts of their roadway system in honor of the division. Further, a spokesperson of the 94th Infantry Division Association announced its future goal to name a portion of I-94 in at least three of the seven states through which the 1,612-mile long interstate highway

passes (beginning in Port Huron, Michigan in the east and continuing through Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and ending in Billings, Montana in the west) in honor of soldiers whose courage and heroism deserve tribute.

POSITIONS:

The 94th Combat Infantry Division Association supports the bill. (10-31-01)

The Department of Transportation does not oppose the bill. (10-31-01)

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ 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.