



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 181 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Bruce Patterson
Committee: Commerce and Labor

Date Completed: 12-13-05

RATIONALE

The Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (national poet laureate) is appointed by the Librarian of Congress and is charged with raising the national consciousness toward a greater appreciation of the reading and writing of poetry. The position of national poet laureate has existed since 1937, and 41 people have served in that capacity. In addition, 39 states have a state poet laureate to promote a greater awareness of poetry's cultural contributions. In order to add to Michigan's cultural richness and foster appreciation of poetry, some people believe that Michigan also should have a poet laureate.

CONTENT

The bill would create a new act to establish the Office of State Poet Laureate within the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries.

The Governor could appoint the State Poet Laureate for a term that did not exceed his or her own term. The State Poet Laureate would serve at the Governor's pleasure, would be exempt from the classified State civil service, and would have to be a Michigan resident. The State Poet Laureate would serve without compensation, but could be reimbursed for his or her actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of his or her duties, as assigned by the Governor.

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

Promoting the arts and humanities enhances a society's cultural richness. Poems have been described as paintings that speak, and poetry can transcend virtually every recognized human boundary, bridging generational, racial, and ethnic gaps. Indeed, Robert Hayden, who was born in Detroit in 1913, became the first African-American to be appointed national poet laureate, in 1976.

According to testimony before the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee by the president of the Poetry Society of Michigan, interest in poetry is widespread in Michigan. The Poetry Society recently sponsored a statewide poetry contest for schoolchildren, which drew considerable interest. The State should promote this interest. The appointment of a State Poet Laureate would be an investment in the future of the poetic art form, and thousands of Michigan poets would benefit from a voice to mentor them. Fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of poetry through the creation of a State Poet Laureate would help to stimulate thought and encourage civility in Michigan, which would enhance the quality of life in the State.

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have a minimal fiscal impact on the State related to expenses incurred by the State Poet Laureate.

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Bowerman

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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.