

Legislative Analysis



VETERANS SERVICE DOG ACT

Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bills 4785 and 4786 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Holly Hughes
Committee: Military and Veterans Affairs
Complete to 12-12-18

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

BRIEF SUMMARY:

House Bill 4786 would create the Veterans Service Dog Act to establish and implement a veterans service dog grant program. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) would be required to establish and implement the program and would use money from a fund created by the bill to provide grants for the acquisition of service dogs for veterans.

House Bill 4787 would amend the Dog Law of 1919 to allow a dog owner to make a voluntary contribution of up to \$10 to the Veterans Service Dog Fund at the time he or she applies for a license for his or her dog.

House Bill 4786 is tie-barred to HB 4785, which means that it could not take effect unless HB 4785 were also enacted.

Each bill would take effect 90 days after being enacted.

DETAILED SUMMARY:

House Bill 4785 would create the “Veterans Service Dog Act.” The Act would require the DMVA to establish and implement a veterans service dog grant program to provide grants for the acquisition of *service dogs* for veterans.

Service dog would mean a dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The work or tasks would have to be directly related to the disability (e.g., guiding an individual who is visually impaired or calming an individual suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder) and would not include the provision of emotional support or companionship or the crime-deterrent effect of a dog’s presence.

The grant program would require that a veteran applying to receive a grant must contribute at least 50% of the cost of the service dog, up to \$3,000.

To apply for a grant, a veteran would have to submit an application to the DMVA that contains all of the following:

- The name, address, and other contact information of the provider of the service dog.
- The total cost to purchase the service dog.

- The amount of the grant being requested.
- The amount the veteran will be contributing toward the purchase of the service dog and documentation of its source.
- A letter in support of the grant from a congressionally chartered veterans' organization or other organization approved by the department.
- Any other information required by the DMVA.

The DMVA would notify the applicant upon approving a grant. Upon confirmation that the veteran had paid his or her share of the cost of the service dog, the DMVA would disburse grant funds to the service dog provider.

Veterans Service Dog Fund

The bill would create the Veterans Service Dog Fund within the state treasury. The state treasurer could receive money or other assets from any source for deposit into the fund, would direct the investment of the fund, and would credit to the fund interest and earnings from fund investments.

The fund would have an accumulated principal limitation of \$5.0 million, exclusive of interest and earnings. Any money received by the fund after it reaches that cap would be forwarded to the state treasurer for deposit into the Michigan Veterans' Trust Fund established in Section 37 of Article IX of the State Constitution. Money in the fund at the close of the fiscal year would remain in the fund and not lapse to the general fund.

The DMVA would be the administrator of the fund for auditing purposes. The DMVA would expend money from the fund, upon appropriation, only for grants issued under the grant program, but could use up to 10% of the money appropriated from the fund for one full-time equivalent (FTE) position to administer the grant program.

Reporting

At least every five years, the DMVA would have to prepare a report for the reporting period that describes the money received by the fund, the balance of the fund, the total expenditures from the fund, and the number of grants issued with money from the fund. The DMVA would provide this report to the standing committees of each house of the legislature with jurisdiction over veterans' issues.

House Bill 4786 would amend the Dog Law of 1919 to allow the application for a dog license to include a place for the applicant to indicate whether he or she wishes to make a contribution of up to \$10 to the Veterans Service Dog Fund created in the Veterans Service Dog Act.

Under the bill, the treasurer or authorized agent of the county, city, or village issuing the dog license would forward to the state treasurer any money received as a contribution. The state treasurer would credit the money to the Veterans Service Dog Fund. The county, township, or city could retain up to 1% of the money collected for administrative purposes.

MCL 287.266

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4785 would have no direct fiscal impact on the DMVA, but the creation of the Veterans Service Dog Fund and the Veterans Service Dog Grant Program would likely require an appropriation of state general fund/general purpose dollars, up to a maximum of \$5.0 million, to fund the grant program. No appropriation to the fund has yet been authorized. The fund would be able to receive money or other assets from any source, including contributions forwarded by counties, townships, or cities from dog owners as provided under HB 4786. Up to 10% of the amount of money appropriated for grants is permitted, but not required, to be expended to support one FTE to administer the grant.

Money deposited into the fund would be limited to \$5.0 million. Money received in excess of \$5.0 million would be forwarded into the Michigan Veterans' Trust Fund. Interest earned from the Michigan's Veterans' Trust Fund is used to issue emergency grants to veterans having temporary financial difficulties with housing, utilities, food, medical equipment, or other issues. Grants issued from the trust fund are provided to counties to support administrative costs and to provide the emergency grants.

House Bill 4786 would have no fiscal impact on the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

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