

HCS HB 427 -- MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

SPONSOR: Day

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Veterans by a vote of 11 to 0.

This substitute changes the laws regarding members of the military, veterans, and their families. In its main provisions, the substitute:

(1) Designates May 1 of each year as "Silver Star Families of America Day" to honor the wounded members of the United States armed forces;

(2) Requires all persons appointed to the Missouri Veterans' Commission to be a member of a statewide veterans' organization for at least two consecutive years prior to their appointment and authorizes the commission to establish rules and regulations necessary for the management and administration of its veteran service programs and cemeteries;

(3) Revises the educational grant program for survivors of war veterans by specifying who is a qualifying military member and who is a combat veteran;

(4) Allows the unclaimed remains of a veteran to be collected by a veterans' service organization for the purpose of interment in a veterans' cemetery if the remains have been in possession of a funeral establishment for at least one year and the funeral establishment has given written notice to another funeral establishment or a person who contracted for the cremation or interment. If the address of the person entitled to the remains cannot be reasonably ascertained, notice must be given in a newspaper of general circulation in the county of the veteran's residence. If the veteran's residence is unknown, notice must be given in the county where the veteran died or, if the death location is unknown, in the county in which the funeral establishment is located. If the remains are not claimed within 30 days of the written notice or within four months of the date of the first newspaper publication, the remains may be given to a veterans' service organization for interment. A veterans' service organization is not liable for simple negligence if it does not scatter the remains but must take all reasonable steps to inter the remains in a veterans' cemetery;

(5) Authorizes the Department of Revenue to provide one set of "PURPLE HEART" specialized license plates free of charge to any person who has been awarded the medal. Any additional set of

special license plates may be obtained at the current fee for specialized plates; and

(6) Requires all court orders regarding child custody or visitation issued or modified while either party is in active military service and deployed out-of-state to be temporary in nature. Upon return from deployment, the party will be given an opportunity to be heard on the child custody and visitation order before a permanent order is entered.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2010, FY 2011, and FY 2012.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill gives the Veterans' Commission some needed rule-making authority to operate the state veterans cemeteries and other veteran service programs. Veterans will be better served if all members of the commission are members of recognized veterans' organizations.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Largent; George Newell, Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations and Vietnam Veterans of America, Missouri State Council; Dewey Riehn, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Missouri Department; Rich Heigert, American Legion, Department of Missouri; and Brian Hunt, Missouri Veterans' Commission.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.