

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1052 (Delegate Owings. *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

Militia - Honor Guard at Burial Service of Veteran

This bill authorizes the Adjutant General to organize a uniformed honor guard from the National Guard or the organized militia to attend the burial service of a deceased veteran if: (1) the commander of a veterans' organization or friend or relative of the deceased requests an honor guard; (2) a uniformed honor guard from the active armed forces or veterans' organization is not available; and (3) the Adjutant General determines that the provision will not have a detrimental effect on the readiness of the National Guard in the event of an emergency or the employment of a member. The bill also authorizes the Adjutant General to request an honor guard from a veterans' organization to attend a burial service if an honor guard from the armed forces is not available. Reasonable compensation of honor guard members must be set by the Adjutant General. The amount may not exceed 75% of one day's basic pay, plus other expenses incurred. The Adjutant General must adopt regulations.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate, but potentially significant, increase in expenditures by the Military Department. The FY 1999 budget includes \$300,000 in general funds for this purpose, contingent on passage of this bill or House Bill 1052. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: Since this is enabling legislation, the actual effect depends on how often the Adjutant General utilizes the authority to organize uniformed honor guards to attend burial services of deceased veterans. The demand for the honor guards could be great in light of the recent discontinuation of some honor guards by certain area armed forces in response to defense downsizing and increasing demands from an aging veteran population. It is noted that Department of Defense guidelines require full honors for active military members and Medal of Honor recipients. The effect of the bill also depends on how often the Adjutant General makes a determination that the provision would not have a detrimental effect on the readiness of the National Guard in the event of emergency or the employment of a member.

In addition, the bill authorizes the Adjutant General to request a veterans' organization to attend a burial service if an honor guard from the armed forces is not available. The Maryland Veterans Commission advises that members of veterans' organizations in general are not trained to render military honors for internments, would likely not be available during the workweek, and may decline to perform memorial-related functions for individuals other than organization members.

According to the Military Department, nearly half of Maryland's more than 525,000 veterans are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s, having served during World War II and the Korean War. According to the Maryland Veterans Commission, the number of veterans to be interred in the five State veterans' cemeteries in fiscal 1999 is estimated at 2,206. Another 130 veterans are interred at Baltimore National Cemetery each year. These estimates do not include veterans interred in private cemeteries. As a point of reference, it is noted that Connecticut's National Guard, the only other National Guard to organize honor guards in lieu of the active armed forces, handles about 1,800 funerals a year.

For illustrative purposes only, 3,000 burial services a year with five honor guard members each at an average rate of \$45 per day would cost about \$675,000. The estimate of 3,000 burial services per year is based on (1) the estimates of annual internments of veterans by the Maryland Veterans Commission; and (2) the Connecticut National Guard's experience, taking into account Maryland's larger population and high concentration of veterans.

The fiscal 1999 budget includes \$300,000 in general funds for the honor guards, contingent on passage of this bill or House Bill 1052. This would fund about 1,333 burial services.

Information Source(s): Military Department, Maryland Veterans Commission, Washington Post (December 1, 1997), Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History:

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