

HCS HB 978 -- VIETNAM WAR MEDALLION PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Jackson (Smith, 14)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Committee on Veterans by a vote of 10 to 0.

This substitute establishes the Vietnam War Medallion Program. Every veteran who honorably served during this war is entitled to receive a Vietnam War medallion, medal, and a certificate of appreciation as long as the veteran is or was a legal resident of Missouri when he or she entered or was discharged from military service or at the time of his or her death. Any spouse or eldest living survivor of a deceased veteran who is entitled to the medallion may receive it on behalf of the deceased veteran.

The Adjutant General will administer the program. Applications for the medallion can be filed with the Office of the Adjutant General at any time after January 1, 2006. Medallions will be awarded until the supply is exhausted. The Adjutant General must notify the General Assembly when the supply of medallions is less than 100.

The substitute creates the Vietnam War Veterans' Recognition Award Fund which will be administered by the Adjutant General. The fund will consist of gifts, donations, and funds transferred to the Veterans Commission Capital Improvement Trust Fund from any remaining balances in the World War II Veterans Recognition Award Fund and the Korean Conflict Veterans Recognition Award Fund. The moneys will be used to solicit designs and to manufacture and distribute the medallions.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill allows veterans of the Vietnam War to receive a medallion, medal, and certificate of honor for their service. Spouses can apply for a medal if the veteran is deceased or surviving children can apply if both the veteran and the spouse are deceased. Many Vietnam veterans were treated poorly when they returned from the war. It's time to honor their service and sacrifice, and it's important to do so while they are living.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives Smith (14) and McGhee; Marine Corps League, Department of Missouri; Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations; American Legion, Department of Missouri; Support Your Troops; Pat Kerr, Veterans Ombudsman; Military Officers Association of America, State Council; Missouri State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America; Missouri National Guard Association; Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Missouri Department; Donald McKenzie; and

Randall A. Wehner.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Alice Hurley, Legislative Analyst