



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

House Office Building, 9 South
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

OFFICIAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**House Bill 5138 as introduced
First Analysis (4-17-02)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Thomas M. George
Committee: Commerce**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

In the Winter 2002 newsletter of the Historical Society of Michigan, the president of the society said, "Many historical societies are struggling with membership, finances, property management, and other issues. With 174 years of experience, HSM is the logical organization for local historical societies to turn to for help and expertise on these matters. In the future, HSM plans to offer regional workshops for local historical societies. HSM believes it can fill a real void by offering these services to its member societies". The society's president went on to say, "Our ability to serve in this capacity would be enhanced by having an official designation from the state. This imprimatur would be a signal to the public that HSM is the authority for local historical societies to turn to". Legislation has been introduced that would designate the Historical Society of Michigan as the state's official historical society.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to designate the Historical Society of Michigan as the official historical society of the state.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Historical Society of Michigan has a web site at www.hsmichigan.org. Literature from the society says that it was founded in 1828 by Territorial Governor Lewis Cass and the prominent historian, geologist, and explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, and later reorganized in 1874. It is a member-supported nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and receives no government financial support. Local historical societies are said to be among the HSM membership.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency reports that the bill would have no fiscal impact on the state or on local units of government. (HFA fiscal analysis dated 4-15-02)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Representatives of the Historical Society of Michigan note that several states have designated an official historical society. In Michigan, the logical choice for such a designation is the Historical Society of Michigan, which has as a part of its mission working with local historical societies. The president of the society has said that "being designated as the official historical society . . . would enhance our standing and place us in a better position to fulfill our mission". Literature from the society sums up its role by saying, "[the society] encourages and supports the work of all with an interest in Michigan history -- including researchers, historical societies, museums, ethnic, racial and cultural groups, communities, educators, and Michigan businesses".

POSITIONS:

The Department of History, Arts, and Libraries has indicated support for the bill. (4-16-02)

The Historical Society of Michigan supports the bill. (4-16-02)

House Bill 5138 (4-17-02)

Analyst: C. Couch

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