

Senate Fiscal Agency  
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**SFA**



**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bills 1086, 1087, and 1088 (as reported without amendment)

House Bill 4875 (Substitute S-2 as reported)

House Bill 4884 (Substitute S-1 as reported)

House Bill 4886 (Substitute S-2 as reported)

House Bill 5006 (Substitute S-2 as reported)

Sponsor: Senator Bill Bullard, Jr. (S. B. 1086)

Senator Art Miller, Jr. (S.B. 1087)

Senator Philip E. Hoffman (S.B. 1088)

Representative Nancy Quarles (H.B. 4875)

Representative Greg Kaza (H.B. 4884)

Representative Patricia Birkholz (H.B. 4886)

Representative Lingg Brewer (H.B. 5006)

Senate Committee: Government Operations

House Committee: Advanced Technology and Computer Development (H.B. 4875, 4884, 4886, & 5006)

Date Completed: 5-12-98

## **RATIONALE**

The massive growth in the popularity and accessibility of the Internet in recent years has revolutionized the ability of private industry, private citizens, and public entities to produce, disseminate, and gather information. In September 1997, the website "http://www.michiganlegislature.org/" was established to provide Internet users with access to a variety of information regarding the Michigan Legislature. Documents and various data originate from both houses of the Legislature and the Legislative Service Bureau; the Library of Michigan provides administrative oversight. Information on the Michigan Legislature Internet site include Senate and House bills and resolutions; bill analysis documents; Senate and House committee schedules, journals, calendars, and session schedules; Public Acts Tables for 1997 and 1998; and Michigan Compiled Laws Tables for 1997 and 1998. While many persons view the website as an excellent tool for the Legislature to provide, and for the people to obtain, critical information regarding legislative business, it has been pointed out that there is no formal requirement that the Legislature continue to provide information on the Internet. It has been suggested that the Legislature, by statute, should have to place certain information on the Internet.

## **CONTENT**

The bills would amend the Legislative Council Act to require the Legislative Council to make available,

free of charge, certain legislative information on the Internet. All the bills (except House Bill 5006 (S-2)) provide that the information maintained by the Council and placed on the Internet under the bills would have to be made available in the shortest feasible time after the information was available. The information that was not maintained by the Council would have to be made available in the shortest feasible time after it was made available to the Council. Each bill states that it would not alter or relinquish any copyright or other proprietary interest or entitlement of the State relating to any of the information made available. The bills are described below.

Senate Bill 1086 would require the Council, beginning January 1, 2001, to make available to the public on the Internet the text of the Senate and House journals for the current legislative session.

Senate Bill 1087 would require the Council, by July 1, 1999, to make available to the public on the Internet each bill analysis prepared by the Senate Fiscal Agency or the House Legislative Analysis Section during the current session.

Senate Bill 1088 would require the Council, beginning July 1, 1999, to make available to the public on the Internet each fiscal bill analysis prepared by the Senate Fiscal Agency or the House Fiscal Agency for the current session.

House Bill 4875 (S-2) would require the Council, beginning July 1, 1999, to make the status of every

bill and resolution that was introduced in each house during the current legislative session available to the public on the Internet.

House Bill 4884 (S-1) would require the Council, beginning July 1, 1999, to make available to the public on the Internet the text of each bill introduced, passed by each house, and enrolled during the current session.

House Bill 4886 (S-2) would require the Council, beginning January 1, 2001, for the current legislative session, to make available to the public on the Internet the legislative calendar; notices of legislative committee and subcommittee meetings, including the agendas; and a listing of the committees of each house and their members.

House Bill 5006 (S-2) would require the Council, beginning July 1, 1999, to make available to the public on the Internet the Michigan Compiled Laws database search and retrieval system. The Council could not charge a fee for this information after June 30, 1999. Currently, the Legislative Council Act specifies that the Council may provide access to computerized legislative databases and information to individuals and organizations that are not a part of the legislative branch of government; and establish a system of fees and charges for access and services. House Bill 5006 (S-2) would eliminate reference to a system of fees and charges for access and services.

Proposed MCL 4.1204f (S.B. 1086)  
Proposed MCL 4.1204c (S.B. 1087)  
Proposed MCL 4.1204d (S.B. 1088)  
Proposed MCL 4.1204e (H.B. 4875)  
Proposed MCL 4.1204b (H.B. 4884)  
Proposed MCL 4.1204a (H.B. 4886)  
MCL 4.1204 (H.B. 5006)

## **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

### **Supporting Argument**

The Internet has become an important tool for those who wish to acquire information in an inexpensive, fast, and efficient manner. Its popularity and use are likely to keep increasing. Currently, through its website the Legislature offers a substantial amount of useful information to enable any resident (or anyone anywhere in the world, for that matter) to keep track of proposed legislation, legislative schedules, official legislative

action, new laws, etc. Though the current climate is conducive to promoting citizen access to legislative information via the Internet, no one can say for sure that future legislatures will continue this practice. The bills would place in statute requirements for legislative information to be accessible on the Internet, and thus would ensure continued access to this information.

### **Supporting Argument**

Not everyone has the opportunity to travel to Lansing to watch the Legislature in session or to pick up copies of bills in which they may be interested. Though copies of bills and other documents can be mailed to residents making requests, some bills move through the House and Senate too quickly for information requests to be addressed in a timely fashion by this method. Though faxing information and documents can help fill some requests, it is not economical to rely on faxes to meet a great number of information requests by constituents. The Internet can provide a quick and relatively inexpensive way for people to track a piece of legislation, or other legislative business.

### **Opposing Argument**

The legislative website is already up and running, and has experienced high usage. A significant public outcry would be raised if the site were, for any reason, discontinued. The bills really are not needed.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Legislature currently makes available on the Internet journals and bill analyses. The cost is included with other information made available on the Internet by the Legislature.

The Library of Michigan has already made available on the Internet bills, resolutions, journals, calendars, committee schedules, session schedules, and public act tables. The Michigan Compiled Laws Database search and retrieval system is still being developed for the Internet. Costs incurred by the Library of Michigan have totaled approximately \$100,000 for hardware and \$400,000 for five FTEs related to maintenance of these systems. The project for the Michigan Compiled Laws has an estimated cost of \$180,000.

Revenue generated by the Legislative Council from access fees to electronic databases (Questor and Bill Status) totaled \$79,360 in FY 1996-97. Under

the bills, the Legislative Council would not be able to charge for information provided from access through the Internet.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.