

HB 471 -- POLICE OFFICER RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

CO-SPONSORS: Jackson, Portwood, Smith (14), Cunningham (86), Lembke (85), Bivins, Icet, Hanaway, Salva, Avery, Stefanick

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 14 to 3.

This bill prohibits the City of St. Louis from requiring that peace officers reside within the limits of the city and prohibits discrimination against any non-resident peace officers. The city may require a peace officer to reside in the State of Missouri as a condition of employment. The city may provide incentives, such as housing supplements or vehicle-use guidelines, to encourage peace officers to locate within the city, but may not authorize the use of department property as an incentive.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the city keeps losing many of its best and brightest officers every year, because the officers want to reside in areas with better schools and, generally, more attractive neighborhoods. In exit interviews of the officers that left in the year 2000, 80% cited the residency requirement as the main reason. Many officers join the force when they are young adults, without a family. Years later, when they have children of school-age, they start looking for a good school district, and many will leave the city. Even officers with family members that have special needs cannot get an exemption from the residency requirement, and they typically are forced to leave the city. The idea that the city should be able to tell anyone where they have to live is just bad policy.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Jackson; St. Louis Police Officers Association; St. Louis Police Leadership Organization; Kansas City Police Officers Association; and Jim Carroll.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that this is an issue of governance (i.e., who should make these types of decisions?). The state seized control of the St. Louis Police Department more than 100 years ago, and since that time has chosen to delegate the authority to oversee the department to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners. The board created the residency requirement in 1973 and would do away with it if it wasn't necessary. Sixty officers left the department in the year 2000, stating the residency requirement as a factor in their decision. Considering the size of the department, that is not a "mass exodus" of police officers. Further, a straw vote taken a few years ago showed that 70% of the city residents approve of the

requirement.

Testifying against the bill were Office of the Mayor, City of St. Louis; St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners; and Representative Jones.

Other witnesses testifying on the bill was City of Kansas City.

Richard Smreker, Senior Legislative Analyst