

HCS HB 777 -- State Institutions of Higher Education

SPONSOR: Wright (Marsh)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on General Laws by a vote of 7 to 4.

This substitute renames Southwest Missouri State University as Missouri State University.

It increases the number of members of the Missouri State University's Board of Governors from eight to 10. The substitute also changes the name of Central Missouri State University to University of Central Missouri.

The substitute specifies that the name change of any higher education institution does not authorize the establishment of new degree programs by procedures other than those established by statute. It also restricts Missouri State University from duplicating the research, missions, professional doctoral programs, and existing first professional programs of the University of Missouri.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that Southwest Missouri State University is no longer a regional university. It now has students from all 114 counties in Missouri, 48 states, and 80 countries. Over the last 10 years, the university has doubled the number of graduate programs. They have also increased their standards to selective admissions. The name change will continue to help the reputation of the university and recruit students and faculty, as well as recruit new businesses to the Springfield area. The university has a good reputation in the state, but changing the name would increase its reputation outside of Missouri and encourage and increase alumni and private giving.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Marsh; Southwest Missouri State University Board of Governors; Rafael Warfield; Thomas Strong; Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce; and Southwest Missouri State University

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that there should be justifiable reasons for a name change, such as something that sets Southwest Missouri State University apart from other regional universities. They do not believe that there is a justifiable reason in this situation. This name change would alter the structure of higher education in Missouri by creating another tier of universities and could have an effect on how

funding is distributed in the future. The University of Missouri has historically been referred to as Missouri State University, and the legislature can't give the name Missouri State University to another institution.

Testifying against the bill were Associated Students of the University of Missouri; Concerned Students of University of Missouri-Columbia; University of Missouri Alumni Association; and Central Missouri State University Board of Governors.

Amy Woods, Legislative Analyst