

HCS HB 896 -- STATE PARK BOARD

SPONSOR: Kelly, 144 (Mayer)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Corrections and State Institutions by a vote of 6 to 4.

This substitute establishes the Missouri State Park Board within the Department of Natural Resources as the authority for all matters pertaining to the state park system. The board will consist of eight members, six will reside in separate congressional districts and at least two members will be from counties with a state historic site of significant importance to military history. Members will be appointed by the Governor, with approval of the Senate, and serve three-year staggered terms. The director of the department will serve as the chair with a tie-breaking vote, and the executive director of the State Historical Society will be an ex-officio member. The board will meet at least twice annually. Members will serve without compensation, but will be reimbursed for necessary expenses.

The board will hold public meetings on any addition, modification, or removal of military monuments, historical markers, designated veteran's grave markers, accepted practices, or permitted public ceremonies on department sites; maintain a registry of monuments and markers on public and private property; establish procedures for the historical marker program; and publish an annual report.

The bill also prohibits any state agency from erecting, modifying, or removing any monument or marker or amending any accepted practice or permitted public ceremony at a department site without notifying the public at least 60 days prior to any planned action, holding a hearing, and receiving approval from the board. Any monuments or markers that were in place on December 21, 2002, must be replaced by August 28, 2004. Monuments may be moved to surrounding property or to accommodate construction or repairs. Anyone who removes, defaces, or destroys any monument, memorial, or designated veteran's grave marker is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

FISCAL NOTE: Not available at time of printing.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is a due process issue regarding the erection, removal, or name change of historic monuments and markers. There have been instances where historic markers have been removed, battle flags taken down, and name changes made on state buildings without any input from interested parties or the public at large. These decisions should not be made by a few people behind closed doors and there should be an

opportunity for people to discuss their concerns in an open forum. By allowing this to happen, we are losing our history, and it is very important not to censor the past.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives Mayer and Kuessner; Bruce Hillis; Historic Preservation Society of Louisiana; Albert Malone; and Missouri First.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill gave informational testimony to the committee.

Others testifying on the bill were Missouri Parks Association; and Department of Natural Resources.

Bob Dominique, Legislative Analyst