

HB 495 -- MISSOURI STATE PARK BOARD

SPONSOR: McGhee

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 6 to 1.

This bill establishes the Missouri State Park Board, created by Executive Order 86-26, which is responsible for managing all aspects of the Historical Marker Program. The board will consist of eight members, two of whom must reside in a county in which a state historic site of significant military history is located.

The Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies are prohibited from erecting, modifying, or removing any state historic military monument located on any site under its control or located on state land listed on the board's registry without first holding a public hearing and receiving the board's approval. The department must publish a public hearing notice in the Missouri Register at least 60 days in advance of any action to seek the board's approval. The notice must also be published once a week for two weeks in any qualified newspaper in the area where the monument is located.

Anyone who knowingly removes, defaces, or destroys any registered state historic military monument without the approval of the General Assembly or the board will be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on General Revenue Fund in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010. Estimated Cost on Other State Funds of \$6,300 in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the Missouri State Park Board needs to be established by statute. There is a due process issue regarding the erection, removal, or name change of historic monuments and markers. 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. When this happens, history is lost; and it is very important not to censor the past. These decisions should not be made arbitrarily, and there should be an opportunity for people to discuss their concerns in an open forum.

Testifying for the bill were Representative McGhee; Dawson Heisman; and Bruce Hillis.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill are against flying the Confederate flag on any state property due to its divisive nature.

Testifying against the bill was Clyde Williams, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Missouri State Conference.