

HB 2117 -- CITY OF ST. LOUIS POLICE FORCE

SPONSOR: El-Amin

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 5 to 1.

This bill allows the City of St. Louis to establish by ordinance a municipal police force completely under the city's authority. Currently, the state oversees the police force for the city through the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say the bill will allow the people of St. Louis to have their own police department for the first time since the Civil War. St. Louis is one of the few cities in the United States without their own police department. There is no rational explanation for the fact that every other county and municipality in the state has its own police department.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives El-Amin and Oxford and Senator Coleman; Mayor Francis Slay, St. Louis City; Terry Kennedy, St. Louis City Alderman; Redditt Hudson, American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri; Stephan Gregali, St. Louis Alderman; Zacki Baruti, Universal African Peoples Organization; Lewis Reed, St. Louis City Board of Alderman; Jennifer A. Florida, St. Louis City Alderwoman; John Chasnoff; and Jamala Rogers, Organization for Black Struggle.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say it gives no details or specifics to ensure this transition to local control is done properly. The bill as written will allow too much interference by the Board of Aldermen into the department and makes the St. Louis Police Department too political so that it will lose its independence. Health insurance and other pension benefits are not specified or guaranteed in the bill for retirees.

Testifying against the bill were Gary Wiegert, St. Louis Police Officers Association; Police Retirement System of St. Louis; Judy Zakibe, St. Louis Republican Central Committee; Matthew Browning; St. Louis Police Leadership Organization; David Summers; Lucille Elson, Civilian Personnel Division; Missouri State Fraternal Order of Police; St. Louis Police Officers Association; Carol Bland; and Ellen Livingston.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill explained that the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners consists of four commissioners, appointed by the Governor with the advice and

consent of the Senate, to serve a four-year term.

Testifying on the bill was Megan Werner, St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners.