

HCS HB 1815 -- OPEN RECORDS AND MEETINGS LAW

SPONSOR: Phillips

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 9 to 2.

This bill specifies that for the purposes of the Open Records and Meetings Law, commonly known as the Sunshine Law, an incident report must not include crash reports.

Any individual named in a crash report, designated as an injured person due to the crash described in a report, the driver of a vehicle or vessel that was involved in the crash described in the crash report, their agents or attorneys, or their insurer or an insurer to which they have applied for coverage, including persons under contract with the insurers to provide claims or underwriting information, may obtain the crash report.

The law enforcement agency generating a crash report must develop a policy pertaining to the copying and distribution of crash reports that meets the guidelines of the agency, including the release of non-identifying information for data capturing purposes. A law enforcement agency is required to release a complete unaltered and unedited crash report concerning the incident to any member of the news media upon request.

The State Highway Patrol may release crash reports as provided by law or rules or regulations adopted by the patrol.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill specifies that an "incident report" does not include a "crash report." Currently, anyone can get a copy of these crash reports.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Phillips.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that they want to ensure that the press is not limited to access to these reports.

Testifying against the bill was the Missouri Press Association.