

HB 603 -- UNION LOBBYING EXEMPTION

SPONSOR: Rone

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 7 to 6. Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 4 and 1 present.

This bill repeals provisions exempting any member of a union from having to register as a lobbyist within five days of beginning lobbyist activities.

This bill is the same as HB 2250 (2016).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will ensure that the same rules for lobbyist registration apply to all types of individuals and groups. Most group tours of the Capitol and per diem expenses to visit the Capitol building do not involve lobbying under existing exceptions.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Rone.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that it would be extremely difficult to register large numbers of union members who visit the Capitol building and receive only per diem reimbursements or travel expenses. Even most union officers are not compensated for lobbying so existing exception is reasonable and should be left in place.

Testifying against the bill were Service Employees International Union; Greg Chastain, Sheet Metal Workers Local 2; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen; Missouri AFL-CIO; United Steelworkers; and AFL-CIO.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that removing an explicit exception for union members could increase the need for case by case analysis or advisory opinions by the Missouri Ethics Commission. It is necessary that an individual receive "valuable consideration" for the purpose of acting as a lobbyist from a lobbyist principal in order to require registration. Many cases of travel expense reimbursement or per diem stipends for members of a group would not require registration if payment is not made by a lobbyist principal in exchange for actual lobbying activities.

Testifying on the bill was James Klahr, Mo Ethics Commission.