

HB 230 -- SUNSHINE LAW

SPONSOR: Dinkins

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 7 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

This bill specifies that certain Department of Corrections records may be closed. Such records include:

- (1) Video recordings of the interior or exterior of a correctional center;
- (2) Audio recordings and transcripts of offenders' telephone conversations;
- (3) Employee staffing patterns;
- (4) Employee defensive tactics training curriculum; and
- (5) Correctional center operations, to the extent that disclosure would impair the department's ability to protect the safety and security of offenders, employees, visitors, and real property.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that they want to make sure employees are working in safe environments and that their families living close by are safe, too. Because of that, there are certain things, such as details included in training manuals, or employee shift or break schedules, they do not want to have subject to the Sunshine Law. Transparency will be maintained but it will keep the safety of employees and their families as well as inmates. Ultimately, this is just for clarification in statute. This does not make something not previously restricted, restricted.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Dinkins and the Missouri Department of Corrections.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the intent to keep everyone safe is shared, but this legislation is overly broad. The language should be as transparent as possible, and this would lead to more lawsuits because people make Sunshine requests to make sure conditions at facilities are safe. Better language to limit the scope might be if there is a clear and present danger necessitating the restriction of information.

Testifying against the bill was the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri.