

HCS HB 1957 -- FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF REAL PROPERTY

SPONSOR: Haffner

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Local Government by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Regulatory Oversight by a vote of 9 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1957.

Currently, foreign ownership of agricultural land in the state of Missouri may not exceed 1% of the total agricultural land in the state. This bill reduces the percentage to 0.5% and requires any sale or transfer of such land by an alien or foreign business to be reported, as defined in the bill, to the Department of Agriculture and the Attorney General 30 days prior to when the sale or transfer is finalized. The Attorney General must review and approve or reject any sale or transfer as provided by in the bill or else the sale or transfer is considered to meet the necessary requirements.

The Department and the Attorney General must review the transactions and investigate acquisitions of agricultural land if the Attorney General believes the acquisition violates these prohibitions. An alien or foreign business that acquires agricultural land must report the status of the usage of such land at intervals established in the bill. If there is a change in land usage, that change must be reported to the Department and the Attorney General within 30 days. Land acquired in violation is subject to court action and divestiture. The limitations on percentage of acreage that an alien or foreign business may acquire do not apply to certain land used for research or experimental purposes.

The bill also prohibits a foreign business from a foreign adversary as identified by the federal government from purchasing any land in the state. Violations of this prohibition must be reported to the Attorney General and adhere to the requirements of the USA Patriot Act of 2001.

The bill adds the Attorney General, in addition to the Department, to all requirements for enforcement and reporting relating to agricultural land owned by foreign entities.

This bill is similar to HB 903 (2023).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

**PROPOSERS:** Supporters say that the security of the nation's food supply is extremely important, and it is the duty of the government to safeguard our security. This bill helps protect food security while balancing it against our economic security. It would allow investment in agriculture in the state but also provide better tracking and enforcement to ensure food security and safety.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Haffner; Mo Farm Bureau; Michael Geary, State Armor Action; Mo Rural Crisis Center; Vivek Malek, State Treasurer; and Arnie C. Dienoff.

**OPPOSERS:** Those who oppose the bill say that the bill sends the wrong message to foreign investors. The government should not be discouraging investment in the state and telling landowners to whom they can sell their property.

Testifying in person against the bill were Jodi Widhalm, Armorvine; Mo Chamber of Commerce; and Missouri Association of Realtors.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.