

HB 1980 -- FIREFIGHTER RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

SPONSOR: Hinman

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Pensions by a vote of 8 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by Rules-Legislative Oversight by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill provides that the Board of Trustees of the Firemen's Retirement System of St. Louis shall not be prevented from simultaneously acting as the trustees of any other pension plan that provides retirement, disability, and death benefits for firefighters employed by St. Louis City.

Additionally, the administration of the other plan includes the ability of the Board to establish rules and regulations for the administration of the plan's funds and for the transaction of the plan's business. The Board shall maintain separate records of all proceedings of the pension plan.

Furthermore, this bill provides that the Board of Trustees shall have the authority and discretion to invest funds of the other pension plan in property of any kind. The Board may choose to invest the funds of the Firemen's Retirement System of St. Louis and the funds of the plan in the same investments if the amounts invested and the gains, profits, or losses are accounted for separately. No benefits due from the pension plan shall be paid from the funds of the System. Additionally, this bill provides that no expenses incurred by the Board in the administration of the other pension plan or in the investment of the other pension plan's funds shall be paid by the funds of the System.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that having one system will avoid duplicative administration and costly expenses.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Hinman; Demetris Alfred, Missouri State Council Of Fire Fighters; and Daniel Clark, St. Louis Firefighters Local 73.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that conversations have been had with fire fighters on the complex issue. This bill would return the pension system to the 2012 model which is state run and takes away local control. Changes implemented at the state level are often less responsive to local fiscal concerns. This bill seems to be legislators from outside the local region attempting to take power away from that region.

Testifying in person against the bill were Casey Millburg, St. Louis Mayor's Office; and Arnie Dienoff.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that this bill will allow the retirement system to administer the pension plan without an alteration of benefits merely a consolidation of boards. The current statute would allow such an administrative shift which would allow for more diversity in the plan and reduce costs overall.

Testifying in person on the bill was John Brewer, The Firemen's Retirement System of St. Louis.

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.