

SS SCS SJR 71 -- ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

SPONSOR: Black (Hovis)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Pensions by a vote of 7 to 0 and 1 present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 0.

This Constitutional amendment would, upon voter approval, authorize the levying of costs and fees to support salaries and benefits for law enforcement personnel, including sheriffs and former sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys and former prosecuting attorneys, and circuit attorneys and former circuit attorneys.

This bill is similar to HCS for HJR 92 (2024).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that without this Constitutional fix the funding for the retirement system will run out within 10 years. Adding the proposed language to the Missouri Constitution will enshrine the importance of the sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys, and circuit attorneys as significant contributors to the administration of justice.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Black; Dwayne Carey; Melissa Lorts, Missouri Sheriffs' Retirement System; and Adam L. Warren.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is a differences in civil cases and criminal cases and adding this language for criminal cases creates a pervasive incentive to seek out criminals simply to fund a retirement. Currently, certain offenses already have fines and just the opportunity to defend oneself in court can have a significant cost. Spreading the cost of retirement across the community as a whole rather than on the backs of lower income criminals would be a better solution. If nobody objects to the issues raised now then if it becomes a problem in the future that would be cause for concern.

Testifying in person against the bill was Missouri NAACP.

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.