

HB 947 -- RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SPONSOR: Riggs

This bill modifies the provisions relating to rural economic development.

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP) (Section 226.035, RSMo)

The bill requires the Department of Transportation, when preparing the STIP, to prioritize projects involving rural roads and highways with high fatality rates.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN STUDY (Section 226.1205)

The bill requires the Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study on potential improvements to the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The study must include an evaluation of increasing the navigation season to 12-month navigation, upgrading the existing locks to 1,200 foot locks, and adding hydropower on existing locks and dams. The Department must report its findings to the General Assembly no later than December 1, 2026.

MISSOURI TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION (Section 348.256)

The bill increases the membership on the Board of Directors for the Missouri Technology Corporation from 15 to 16 members and specifies that at least six members must reside in rural areas. In addition, the bill increases the board members appointed by the Governor from 11 to 12 and requires they be confirmed by the Senate.

The bill requires that the money expended by the Corporation for the benefit of rural areas be equivalent to the percentage of residents residing in the rural areas.

ELECTRICAL CORPORATIONS (Sections 393.170 and 393.407)

Before entering into contracts to sell retail or wholesale power in the State, the bill requires certain electrical corporations that are not otherwise regulated by the Public Service Commission to obtain a certificate of convenience and necessity.

The bill prohibits an electrical corporation, independently owned utility, municipally owned utility, or electric cooperative to close or cease operation of any coal-fired power plant for five years after the effective date of the bill.

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS (Sections 393.1120 and 393.1122)

At least 90% of all real and tangible personal property solar equipment associated with a project that uses solar energy to generate electricity must be made in or sourced from the United States. At least 90% of all labor associated with the installation of a project that uses solar energy to generate electricity must be made in or sources from Missouri.

The total amount of real property associated with all solar energy projects in any county can not exceed 2% of all cropland in the county. The county commission can increase the percentage by order, ordinance, regulation, or a vote of the residents. Any resident of the county has standing to bring suit if he or she believes that the cap on cropland has been met.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (Section 620.070)

The bill establishes the Rural Development Office within the Department of Economic Development to advocate for and promote rural Missouri and focus on efforts designed to aid rural improvements. The duties of the office are specified in the bill.