

HCS HB 1063 -- SUNSHINE LAW

SPONSOR: Sassmann

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Legislative Review by a vote of 6 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 8 to 2.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1063.

Currently, the Sunshine Law requires public governmental bodies to make meetings and records open to the public unless specifically exempted. This bill adds to the list of exemptions by allowing records to protect plant or animal species considered endangered, threatened, critically imperiled, imperiled, or vulnerable to be closed records if releasing such records would cause the species to be at an increased risk of peril.

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this allows records showing boundaries where species of concern (animals or plants) are located and administered by the Department of Conservation to be closed. Some individuals could seek out endangered species to trap and sell on the black market, and it's a multi-billion dollar industry. In some cases the species of concern could be a plant and some people could want to trespass on land and disrupt that. Conservation has over 800 species of conservation concern, and this is mostly about private property rights and their ability to protect information about what private property owners have on their property, but they also want to protect endangered species because some of these species can only be captured from the wild, not raised in captivity.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Sassmann; Aaron Jeffries, Missouri Department of Conservation; MO Park & Recreation Association; and Conservation Federation of MO.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this is well-intentioned but is too vague and it would be too difficult to enforce. There is a better, more narrow way to write this so the information could be protected without diluting the Sunshine Act. This will inadvertently bring about unintended consequences.

Testifying in person against the bill were Mike Jenner and Armorvine.

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.