

HCS HB 1869 -- REPAIRING AND RESETTING GRAVE MARKERS FOR DECEASED VETERANS

SPONSOR: Roberts

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Veterans and Armed Forces by a vote of 21 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1869.

This bill creates the "Veterans' Grave Marker Trust Fund" for the purpose of repairing or resetting grave markers for deceased veterans at cemeteries located in this State that have been damaged by natural causes.

The Commission must establish a grant program to provide reimbursement for the repairing or resetting of certain grave markers of deceased veterans. The Commission will award a grant for reimbursement if the deceased veteran:

- (1) Has served at least 180 days as an active-duty member of the U.S. military service or died while on official military duty status as an active-duty member;
- (2) Was discharged under honorable conditions and was never convicted of a State or Federal criminal offense or any capital criminal offense;
- (3) Did not die under circumstances that would bring discredit upon the military services or the State; and
- (4) Is buried or interred in a privately owned cemetery or burial plot within this State.

The bill requires the Commission to establish and post on its website the contents of the grant application, and the procedures and timelines by which property owners may apply for grants.

The Veterans' Commission will award grants on a first-come, first-served basis. The amount of the grant to be awarded will be equal the actual cost expended to repair or reset the grave marker but cannot exceed \$2,500.

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 bill allows loved ones of deceased veterans to continue to honor those who served this country. This would not be for vandalism, but it would be for damage caused by natural causes.

Testifying in person for the bill was Representative Roberts.

OPponents: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that this would require more funding for the Commission and it would be an additional responsibility being placed on the Commission. The Commission does not currently have enough full-time employees to run this program.

Testifying in person on the bill was Paul Kirchhoff, Missouri Veterans Commission.

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.