

HCS HB 2998 -- RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SPONSOR: Riggs

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

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2998.

This 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, 2029.

The bill also 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.

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

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that 40% of Missourians live in a rural area. This bill would provide an office to help with rural economic development for those living in rural Missouri. In addition, it is important to protect the eight coal-fired power plants in Missouri that provide baseload power to the state.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Riggs; Missouri Electric Cooperatives; and Armorvine.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the Missouri Department of Transportation does not have jurisdiction over the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, but that it would work with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to complete the study. The study will cost approximately \$3 million and take 3 years to complete.

Others testifying also stated that there are 92,000 dams in the United States and only 3% of those generate power.

Testifying in person on the bill were Dr. Vikram Lakhanpal, Most Policy Initiative; and Pamela Harlan, Missouri Department of Transportation.

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.