



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 1997</b>		DATE: <b>1/20/2026</b>	
COMMITTEE: <b>Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs</b>			
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C. AC "HONEST ABE" DIENOFF</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/20/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>			



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>AMY M CASTRO</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/20/2026 3:48 PM</b>
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>		

I am opposed to creating a legislative security force. The jurisdiction and limits are not clearly defined. High concern for the separation of powers and accountability. The text grants "all powers...necessary" to these new officers. While assuring public safety is legitimate, a new armed force under direct legislative control with broad undefined powers under the guise of "sharing information with other law divisions" offers more risks than benefits. Strongly opposed.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>BRENDA HOPFER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:                  ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 2:45 PM</b>
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**I do not support this bill.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>DEE ANN POOLE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 2:39 PM</b>
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I oppose HB 1997. The state capitol already has security officers and protocols in place to protect Missouri legislators, staffers and visitors. What "emergency" scenario do you foresee that would require additional security? I would think if there's additional measures that need to be taken, simply securing a partnership with Jefferson City police would and should be sufficient. I don't believe it's prudent to spend precious resources on additional security members under the pretense of an imagined emergency. Thank you for your attention to this matter.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>GARY RIDENHOUR</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 3:16 PM</b>

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Missouri doesn't need new and improved security. The current security is doing an excellent job.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>GERI THWING</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/20/2026 2:15 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>GERI THWING</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/20/2026 2:19 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>GORDEN SHERYL</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:                  ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 7:04 PM</b>

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**There is already a Capitol force able to handle any protests or other'emergency' that may arise. I oppose the need for a legislative force**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JACOB CHANCE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 6:03 PM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>MICHAEL COMPTON</b>	PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>ACT FOR MISSOURI</b>	TITLE:	
ADDRESS:		
CITY: <b>WARRENSBURG</b>	STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>64093</b>
EMAIL: <b>mike@act4mo.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/20/2026 2:39 PM</b>
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Chair and members of the committee,

I am a Missouri citizen submitting written testimony in opposition to HB 1997.

HB 1997 authorizes the House or Senate to employ “legislative security officers” who are POST-licensed peace officers and grants them all powers granted to law enforcement officers in this state that are necessary to ensure the “proper security and functioning” of the General Assembly, including the power to apprehend and arrest persons. This is a substantial expansion of government authority written in broad, open-ended terms—without basic guardrails that Missourians should expect any time arrest power is being expanded inside the people’s Capitol.

1) “No fiscal impact” relies on a claim the bill changes little—but then why pass it?

During the hearing, it was stated that this proposal is intended for existing security staff, and that is why fiscal notes assume no fiscal impact. It was also stated those staff are already POST-licensed.

If that is true, then the committee and the public deserve a clear explanation of what this bill actually changes. If the officers are already POST-licensed and security is already being provided, why do we need an emergency clause and a new statutory grant of “all powers...necessary,” including arrest authority? If the bill is merely “codifying what already exists,” that should be spelled out precisely and narrowly—because the text as written is not narrow.

2) The bill is unnecessary and overbroad for “chamber floor” security

The sponsor stated the intent is for security staff who work on the chamber floor. If so, this bill still goes far beyond what is needed. Capitol Police are present, trained, and available to respond quickly to incidents and arrests. If an event occurs on the floor or in the immediate area, Capitol Police can be summoned to handle criminal enforcement. The existence of Capitol Police also means this bill is not required to ensure threat awareness or response capability.

3) Crime network/database access creates serious misuse risk without safeguards

Supporters pointed to “communications” and access to alerts and criminal databases as a reason for POST and peace officer status. But for chamber-floor security, direct access to statewide crime

databases is not justified.

More importantly, expanding access to sensitive criminal justice databases in an environment controlled by chamber leadership creates a serious misuse risk. Without explicit guardrails, it invites abuse—such as using law-enforcement databases to “check up on” or look for information about citizens who come to the Capitol to oppose leadership priorities.

Missourians should not have to worry that exercising their right to observe, petition, or protest at the Capitol could lead to informal “background checks” or political targeting. If the legislature wants better threat notification, that can be achieved through coordination with Capitol Police and established channels—without granting broad database access or open-ended arrest powers to a legislature-controlled unit.

4) The bill provides no chain of command, jurisdiction limits, or accountability

HB 1997 does not define:

geographic jurisdiction,

chain of command and supervision,

coordination protocols with Capitol Police,

transparency/reporting requirements,

complaint handling and discipline procedures beyond POST decertification.

Those omissions matter because the bill grants a sweeping power: “all powers...necessary,” including arrest authority. Government power should be clearly limited and accountable—especially inside a public civic forum.

5) Liability protection claim is not in the bill text

During the hearing, the sponsor stated that this legislation would protect security members from being held legally liable for actions within their regular duties. I reviewed the text of HB 1997 as filed, and there is no language providing immunity, indemnification, limitation of liability, or any legal shield. If that is an objective, this bill does not accomplish it.

Request to the committee

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to vote NO on HB 1997.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,  
Michael Compton



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>NATALIE STEPHENS</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/19/2026 3:39 PM</b>	
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I oppose this bill because it lacks clarity in many areas including who hires, who commands, and who coordinates with existing Capitol police. In addition, how can it be zero cost to the taxpayers if it requires hiring of additional personnel? It also appears unnecessary since the existing Capitol police have done a good job securing the Capitol property, handling special events, and maintaining daily order.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH BERRY</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/17/2026 12:21 PM</b>	
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I oppose HB 1997 because Missouri taxpayers are already paying for multiple layers of security, and this bill creates a pathway to additional, ongoing costs without justification.

The State of Missouri already funds Capitol Police, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and contracted security services to provide protection at the Capitol and for legislators. HB 1997 does not demonstrate a security gap that warrants expanding authority, personnel, or infrastructure. Instead, it authorizes new or expanded security capacity without a defined fiscal limit, staffing cap, or cost control mechanism.

Authorizing new security functions without clearly identifying funding sources or proving necessity shifts the burden to taxpayers through future appropriations. At a time when Missourians are already stretched by rising costs, it is not responsible to approve legislation that duplicates existing services and invites permanent spending increases.

Security is important—but fiscal discipline is also a public safety issue. Taxpayers deserve transparency, restraint, and proof of need before additional security expenses are authorized.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 1997.

With continued civic engagement,  
 Rev. Sarah M. Berry



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>LAUREL YOUMANS</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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