

HB 2144 -- SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD STAMP ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Whorton

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Senior Citizen Advocacy by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill authorizes the Family Support Division within the Department of Social Services to assist elderly individuals who qualify for the federal Food Stamp Program in obtaining supplemental food stamps. Subject to appropriations, households of one or two elderly individuals who are at least 65 years of age will be entitled to receive supplemental assistance.

Qualified households consisting of one eligible elderly individual will receive supplemental assistance; however, the benefit combined with the aid the individual receives under the federal program cannot exceed \$30 per month. Qualified households of two eligible elderly individuals cannot receive combined assistance exceeding \$60 per month.

The provisions of the bill will expire August 28, 2010.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$2,326,365 in FY 2009, \$2,450,160 in FY 2010, and \$408,360 in FY 2011. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will increase the minimum amount for food stamp assistance for seniors to \$30 instead of \$10. The bill could be considered an economic incentive because it will increase food sales for grocers and will save the state money in the long run by decreasing health care costs to malnourished seniors. The elderly cannot survive on \$10 a month to buy enough food to last for a month. It has been 34 years since the minimum \$10 benefit was established. The bill has an expiration date in two years so that the benefit can be re-evaluated, is subject to appropriations, and has no current funding in the budget.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Whorton; Rebecca Flaherty; Missouri Association for Social Welfare; AARP-Missouri; and Patrice Donehue, Silver Haired Legislature.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.