

HB 71 -- CITY OF ST. LOUIS POLICE FORCE

SPONSOR: Nasheed

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 7 to 2.

Currently, the state oversees the police force for the City of St. Louis through the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners. This bill allows the city to establish and maintain a municipal police force under its own authority and provides for the employment of the officers and employees of the current police force and the continuation of their salaries, benefits, and pension plan, as well as the continuation of any regulations regarding residence. Any retired officer must maintain his or her accrued benefits.

Provisions relating to the board will expire upon the effective date of the bill.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on General Revenue Fund in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014. Estimated Income on Other State Funds of Unknown in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that St. Louis is one of only two cities in the United States that has a state-appointed board over its police department. State control over the police force dates back 150 years. Placing control of the police department back with the city will improve accountability.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Nasheed; Reddit Hudson; Harry Kennedy, St. Louis Board of Aldermen; Jeff Rainford, City of St. Louis Mayor's Office; Pelopidas, LLC; and Rex and Jeanne Siquefield.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the board of police commissioners contains local residents, so even though the Governor makes the appointments, the commissioners do have ties to the community. Putting the police under control of the mayor and board of aldermen increases the chances that local politics could be interjected into police procedural matters.

Testifying against the bill were St. Louis Police Officers Association; Joseph Steiger, St. Louis Police Officers Association; and Butch Albert, Missouri State Fraternal Order of Police.