

HCS SCS SB 315 -- POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS

SPONSOR: Dixon (Haahr)

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 7 to 2. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on General Laws by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill changes the laws involving political subdivisions. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Requires the State Auditor to audit any political subdivision of the state if requested to do so by a petition only if it is submitted by a person who resides or owns real property within the boundaries or area of service of the political subdivision, the petition is submitted within one year from requesting the petition, and it is signed by the required percent of qualified voters of the subdivision;

(2) Allows any individual who has signed or allegedly signed the petition to submit a sworn statement to the State Auditor that he or she did not sign the petition or that he or she wishes to rescind the signature. The statement must be made within 10 days from submission of the petition to the State Auditor. If the statement is timely filed, the signature must be withdrawn and must not count toward the required threshold;

(3) Allows cities, towns, and villages to charge for repairs and upkeep of specified buildings as a type of real estate tax and to enforce remedies based on delinquent real estate tax law for nonpayment;

(4) Modifies the ballot language so that the question will be whether to continue a public safety sales tax that is currently submitted to the voters every five years in the city of Springfield. Failure by the voters to approve continuation will result in a repeal of the tax;

(5) Clarifies the existing rule that political subdivisions cannot require minimum wages or specified employee benefits beyond those required by state or federal law; employee benefits are defined in the bill;

(6) Allows the cities of Holt Summit and Lake Mykee to merge if desired using the process under Section 72.150, RSMo;

(7) Specifies that if at the time a vacancy occurs in the office of county commissioner, clerk of the county commission, collector

of revenue, county assessor, county treasurer, county auditor, county coroner, or county recorder, then it must be filled within 60 days with the appointment subject to the advice and consent of the Senate; procedures for senate advice and consent are found in Article IV, Section 51 of the Missouri Constitution. These provisions must not apply to charter counties;

(8) Sets forth a recall petition process for removal of school board members in the St. Joseph School District. The recall process is specified in the bill and requires a petition with 750 verified signatures. Vacancies in the district will be filled by appointment of the county commission and any individual removed from office using the recall process will be ineligible for appointment to the school board; and

(9) Currently, the Springfield School District is an urban school district that was previously exempted from school board member terms of six years in length. This bill updates the description of the City of Springfield and provides that the exemption from the six-year school board member term only applies to urban school districts located in the City of Springfield. It also repeals obsolete language relating to the election of school board members in the Springfield School District from the 1960 decennial census.

The bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill makes useful technical changes to education statutes and updates definitions.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Dixon and Michelle Scott Huffman, Missouri National Education Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.