

HB 1698 -- MEET IN MISSOURI ACT

SPONSOR: Rowden

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Commerce by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill establishes the Meet in Missouri Act and creates the Major Economic Convention Event in Missouri Fund for the administration of the act. For major convention plans that meet all the requirements of the act, a grant must be paid by the Department of Economic Development to the eligible commission.

The department director must not issue a grant until he or she has approved a written major convention plan submitted by an eligible commission. The plan must meet specified conditions before it can be approved.

The department director must annually request that the General Assembly appropriate an amount equal to the total of all approved grants scheduled for disbursement that year. The appropriation cannot exceed \$3 million in any year.

Within 180 days of the conclusion of any major convention event for which a grant was disbursed, the commission that received the grant must provide a written report to the department director detailing the final amount of eligible event costs incurred and the attendance figures. If the actual attendance figures for the event is less than the 50% requirement but more than 25%, the commission must refund a portion of the grant equal to the excess received that is greater than the actual percentage of out-of-state attendance. If 25% or less of the attendees meet the requirement, the entire amount of the grant must be refunded.

This bill is similar to HB 1313 (2015).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that Missouri hosts over 22.3 million visitors each year and that hosting conventions has become a very competitive industry. The bill allows cities to compete more effectively to bring large conferences to the state.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rowden; Kathleen M. Ratcliffe, St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission; Marci Bennett, Missouri Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau; Cori Day, Visit KC; Amy Schneider, City of Columbia Convention & Visitors Bureau; Missouri Restaurant Association; Visit KC; Joseph T. Ward; Jeff Seifaied, Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau vs; St. Louis Economic Development

Partnership; and Missouri Hotel and Lodging Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.