

HCS HBs 302 & 228 -- LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

SPONSOR: Hill

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 11 to 1.

This bill establishes the Blue Alert System to aid in the identification, location, and apprehension of any individual or individuals suspected of killing or seriously injuring a local, state, or federal law enforcement officer. The Department of Public Safety will coordinate with local law enforcement agencies and public commercial television and radio broadcasters to effectively implement the system. Participation is entirely optional for local law enforcement agencies and federally licensed radio and television broadcasters, but the program will include at least: the Department of Public Safety, Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation, and Missouri Lottery. Knowingly making a false report that triggers an alert is a class A misdemeanor.

The bill also establishes the Blue Alert System Oversight Committee, which will develop criteria and procedures for the Blue Alert System. The committee will be housed in the Department of Public Safety. The bill specifies how many members the committee will have, what entities will be represented, and the length of the terms members will serve.

Lastly, the bill establishes the Blue Alert System Fund, which shall consist of all gifts, donations, bequests, and transfers to the fund. Moneys in the fund shall be used for the sole purpose of administering the Blue Alert System.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is already a great system of communication within the police departments, so establishing this system would be a great way to disseminate certain information to a wider audience. It is time to arm the public with a tool to help catch people who attack law enforcement.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hill; Missouri Police Chiefs` Association; Kevin Ahlbrand, Missouri Fraternal Order of Police; Missouri Department of Public Safety; Missouri State Council Of Firefighters; Missouri State Troopers Association; Doyle Troy; and Karen Aroesty, Anti Defamation League, Missouri/Southern Illinois.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that FEMA runs the emergency alert system and currently, the only alerts able to be disseminated through that system are the weather alerts and Amber alerts. Other alert systems are currently disseminated regionally, and the individual regions push the alerts through to the various media outlets. The plan is to have a system that works through a satellite orbital data system, rather than an Internet-based system, because the Internet does not always work properly in rural areas.

Testifying on the bill were Kemp Shoun, Missouri State Highway Patrol and Missouri Broadcasters Association.