

HB 548 -- ETHICS

SPONSOR: Curtman

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Government Oversight by a vote of 8 to 3.

This bill prohibits any employee of a state agency or department from engaging in any activity requiring registration as a legislative lobbyist, testifying in an official capacity in favor of or against legislation before a committee of the General Assembly, or remaining on the floor of either chamber of the General Assembly during a session thereof while receiving compensation for time worked including per-diem compensation.

The bill does not prohibit any state agency official or employee from making public appearances or testifying before a committee of the General Assembly for informational purposes only. State agency employees may provide their own personal opinions on legislation at committee meetings of the General Assembly or with individual legislators during those hours when they are not being compensated for time worked or receiving a per diem. Salaried employees shall not count any time spent providing personal opinions on legislation as compensated time, without regard to whether the time is compensated at an hourly rate or is a salary requirement.

The bill includes a prohibition on supporting or opposing legislation in the general ban on political activities by state employees under Section 115.646, RSMo. No contribution or expenditure of public funds shall be made by any state agency or any member or employee thereof to advocate, support, or oppose any ballot measure or candidate for public office or to employ in any capacity whatsoever any individual who is required to register as a legislative lobbyist. No state agency shall compensate or provide anything of value to an individual required to register as a legislative lobbyist in exchange for such individual's lobbying services. A violation of these provisions is a class B misdemeanor.

The bill does not prohibit the political activities of elected statewide officials, members of the General Assembly, members of the judicial branch of government, or the staff and employees of such elected officials and judges.

This bill is similar to HB 2493 (2016).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will clarify that public funds should not be expended on lobbying that benefits state agencies financially. State agency representatives are free to

testify on their own time or testify for informational purposes and provide information to General Assembly members. State employees wishing to give their own personal opinions will not be compensated for such activities.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Curtman and the Missouri Cattlemen's Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.