

HB 2179 -- ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ISRAEL

SPONSOR: Richardson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 12 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules-Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 7 to 1.

This bill prevents any public entity from entering into a contract with a company that is boycotting Israel. This section shall be known as the "Anti-Disrimination Against Israel Act" (Section 34.6000, RSMo).

This bill is the same as SB 849 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this country, and the state of Missouri specifically, enjoy strong economic ties with Israel. Supporters stress that this bill only prevents the state from doing business with companies that boycott Israel, not individuals, and therefore it does not violate citizens' First Amendment rights. Supporters say that 21 other states have already passed similar legislation. This bill is intended to support the state of Israel against an international movement which seeks to destroy it. Supporters believe that the situation with Israel is unique because the state has been singled out and targeted due to its character as a Jewish state. Supporters say that a peaceful future relies on increased economic opportunities for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Richardson; Jim Conrady, Christians United For Israel; Marcy Cornfeld; Richard Cornfeld; Orna Dar; Lisa Eisenhauer; Concerned Women for America of Missouri; Suzanne Garges; Avi Goldfarb; Debra Greenawalt; Elie Harir; Galit Lev-Harir; G. Richard Hastings; Julia Mendelow; Dillon Hosier, Israeli-American Coalition For Action; James Mucklestone; Naftali Kadosh; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Bruce Michelson, Jr.; Rori Picker Neiss, Jewish Community Relations Council; Melinda Powell; Andrew Rehfeld; Eli Sadon; BIOSTL; Sharril Sherwood; and Harvey Tettlebaum.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that boycotting is a protected free speech right. Boycotting allows individuals to protest policies and attempt to affect change in a peaceful, non-violent manner. This country has a proud history of protecting the rights of its citizens to express their political opinions without fear of government reprisals. Opponents say that this bill would violate the United States Constitution and lawsuits have already been filed in other states that have passed similar language. A federal court in Kansas recently granted a preliminary injunction

preventing the state from enforcing such a law. Opponents say that by passing this bill we are forcing Missourians to choose between their moral convictions and their economic needs. Opponents say the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement is not targeting the Jewish faith, but is a protest organized against Israel's aggressive policies toward Palestinians and its actions in the West Bank. Opponents of South Africa's Apartheid policies engaged in similar protests against South Africa until the apartheid system was eventually abolished.

Testifying against the bill were Rasha Abousalem; Neveen Ayesh; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; Farah El-Jayyousi; Jalal El-Jayyousi; Mahmood Hasan Choudhury, M.D.; Yael Shomroni; George Smith; Betty Tsang; and Michael Volz.