

HCS HJR 22 -- INITIATIVE PETITIONS

SPONSOR: Eggleston

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HJR 22.

Upon voter approval, this proposed Constitutional amendment would require the sponsor(s) of initiative petitions proposing Constitutional amendments to collect signatures of 12% of legal voters in every Congressional district and to submit any approved petition to the General Assembly for consideration in a manner similar to a bill. The signature of the Governor is not required.

If the General Assembly approves a petition without change, then the sponsor(s) may submit it to the Secretary of State to be placed on the ballot at the next general election. If the General Assembly amends or does not pass a petition, then the sponsor(s) may decide whether to place the amended version or the original unamended version on the ballot at the next general election. In cases where the General Assembly has approved a petition or when its amended version is submitted, a simple majority vote is required for passage. If a version not approved by the General Assembly is submitted, then a two-thirds majority vote is required. Time limits are specified in the amendment and sponsors will be able to submit petitions during either session of the General Assembly prior to the general election occurring every two years in November.

This resolution is similar to HCS HJR 97 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the state constitution should be limited to fundamental rights. Many states do not allow use of initiatives to amend their constitutions. The Missouri Constitution is approximately 10 times larger than its federal counterpart and is rapidly expanding in length. This resolution allows an indirect process so that the legislature maintains an oversight and vetting role in the process.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Eggleston; Missouri

Cattlemen'S Association; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Soybean Association; Opportunity Solutions Project; and James Berberich, Jefferson County Republican Central Committee.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that legislative involvement may inhibit voter participation and prevent the will of the people from being law. Citizens should have the fundamental right to modify both statutes and the Constitution and have held these rights for long periods of time. The initiative process is difficult and should not be made more stringent so that legislation written by the people has little chance to appear on the ballot or be voted into law.

Testifying against the bill were Alice Barber; Barbara Beier; United for Missouri; Frances Farah; Missouri AFL-CIO; Jahnavi Delmonico; Richard G Von Glahn, Missouri Jobs With Justice Voter Action; Sarah Starnes; Stephen Davey; Susan Gibson; Melissa Vatterott, Missouri Coalition for the Environment; John Saxton; Arnie Dienoff; Padraic McGrath; Brian Wingbermuehle; Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri; Stephanie A. Clarke; Missouri Budget Project; Carly Langlois; Gene Davison; Jenny; Shelley Swoyer; Susan Keturah Schmalzbauer; Tony Smith; Collins F Chetwin; Lisa Ann Williams; Margie Richcreek; Sierra Club Missouri Chapter; and the Jobs With Justice Voter Action.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill was Cheryl Hibbet who provided written testimony.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.