

HCS HB 1481 -- LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

SPONSOR: Christ

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 17 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1481.

This bill specifies that, when the city of St. Louis passes ordinances, no ordinance can in any manner conflict or interfere with the powers of the Board of Police Commissioners. Additionally, the mayor or any city officer shall not impede or hinder the Board of Police Commissioners. Any such person who forcibly resists or obstructs the execution or enforcement of provisions related to the Board will be subject to a penalty of \$1,000 for each offense and will be forever thereafter disqualified from holding or exercising any office or employment under the mayor or common council or municipal assembly of the city.

On August 28, 2024, the Board shall assume control of the municipal police department of St. Louis and, no later than September 28, 2024, the Governor must appoint to the Board four commissioners.

The Board must initially employ, without reduction in rank, salary, or benefits, all commissioned and civilian personnel of the municipal police department. The Board is required to appoint and employ a permanent police force consisting of not less than 1,313 patrolmen. The Board may continue to employ as many non-commissioned police civilians as it deems necessary in order to perform the duties imposed on them, which will include city marshals and park rangers. The Board will grant every member of the police force a certain number of paid vacation days based on how long each member has served as provided in the bill.

The bill specifies that the maximum number of officers of varying ranks the police force can have. The salaries paid as of August 28, 2024, shall not be less than the annual salaries paid to each member before the enactment of this bill. No additional compensation will be given to any officer of the rank of lieutenant or above for overtime, court time, or stand-by court time. Probationary patrolmen, patrolmen, and sergeants must receive compensation for all hours of service in excess of the established regular working period, for all authorized overtime, and for employees who complete academic work at an accredited college or university up to a certain amount as provided in the bill. Additionally, certain officers may receive up to 10% of their

salary in additional compensation for hours worked between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. Such officers may currently receive up to 5% of their salary as additional compensation.

This bill provides that, until the Board adopts other investigative and disciplinary procedures, the police force shall follow the disciplinary and investigative procedures established by the Police Manual of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department that are consistent with law. The Board will not adopt any disciplinary procedures that do not include the summary hearing Board procedures provided for currently in the Police Manual. This bill provides that reimbursements from the Legal Expense Fund to the Board for liability claims must be on a 21 equal share basis per claim up to a maximum of \$1 million per fiscal year.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 702 (2023).

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 this is to create a better foundation for the St. Louis Police Department to protect a city that has been decimated by crime. This would replace the current local board with a board of police commissioners, and those appointed to the board will be local citizens and the mayor. This will actually give the city more control than it has ever had. A police department should never ride the pendulum of politics. There was a windfall of money from the Rams and other things and none of the money was set aside for the police department budget. The officers in the department do not feel like they have the support of their department and they do not feel like they have the resources they need to do their jobs. The manpower and morale in the police department is at an all-time low. The bureaucracy is destroying the department, making everything difficult at every turn. None of this happened when they were under state control. Things that needed to get paid got paid, things that needed to get fixed got fixed. Crime is up in Jackson County and the issue there is they have a prosecutor problem. St. Louis got a new prosecutor and now homicides have dropped sharply. Supporters say that in her first week, the mayor of the city of St. Louis cut funding to the police department. The board of aldermen put it back but the mayor refused to spend it and 125 patrol jobs were cut also in her first week. Diverting funds from the police department is also considered de-funding. The local control transfer was never meant to be a permanent solution, it was conditional on the city turning things around but that hasn't happened. There is currently a case that could take \$50 million a year from the city of St. Louis and

the president of the board of aldermen said that if that happens, that money will come out of the patrol's budget.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Christ; Donnell Walters, Ethical Society of Police; Jane Duker; Missouri Police Chiefs Association; and Jay Schroeder, SLPOA.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that, at a time like this, steady leadership is important for a police department. The city hired an outside chief because it recognized that it needed change and improvement and it wanted fresh eyes on the department. Other cities in other states have had success under local control and that can happen in St. Louis, it just takes a lot of work and effort. The city was affected by Ferguson, George Floyd, the pandemic, and other things. But the city is coming out of it and it is making improvements. Many statistics have improved so the hope is that the new police chief will get a chance to make changes before the effort to transfer the department to state control resumes. There are many efforts underway to increase morale and recruitment. The city still has its challenges but it saw last year a 21% decline in homicides and there are other types of offenses that have also decreased. The police department makes up about a third of the general budget in the city but that is not the only type of investment made into the department. The chief works with the mayor and the mayor has empowered the chief to do his job. It is not the state's money at issue; it's the residents' money. It's important to invest in things in the city, not just patrol positions. The board will be state controlled even if it has residents of the city on it, because those people will be answering to the Governor. It is important to let the residents and the police department govern themselves because they are capable.

Testifying in person against the bill were Empower Mo; Robert J. Tracy, St. Louis Metropolitan Police; Mo State NAACP; Keith Rose; and L. Jared Boyd, City of St. Louis Mayor's Office.

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