

HCS HBs 1972 & 2483 -- LAND CONVEYANCE

SPONSOR: Copeland

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 8 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1972 & 2483.

This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to comply with any final judgment in a court of highest jurisdiction to sell an interest in specified property that is currently subject to a federal easement under 16 U.S.C. 23 Section 1274(a)(2). This is a type of scenic easement for rivers under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The Commissioner of the Office of Administration shall set terms and the Attorney General shall approve the instrument of conveyance.

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 bill attempts to authorize possible judicial orders or remedies involving a federal easement in land purchased by the Department of Natural Resources for use as a state park. The bill authorizes only remedies involving the easement area which is approximately 625 acres in size. The funds originally used to purchase the park were arguably designated for environmental uses in other areas of the state, however, this legislation involves only a legal issue concerning whether Missouri can develop a public park on this type of federal easement.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Copeland.

OPponents: Those who oppose the bill say that the land should be used as a state park and would provide useful entertainment for Missouri residents, preserve natural features, and increase tourist revenue. There has been a huge upswing in park use during the pandemic and new parks are necessary to meet demand.

Testifying against the bill were Arnie C. Dienoff; Claire Meyners; Francine Glass; Mary Nemecek, Burroughs Audubon Society of Greater Kansas City; Melissa Vatterott, Missouri Coalition for the Environment; Michael K Laturno; Nicole Cooper; Sean Coerver;

Shirley Wolverson; Kendra Varns Wallis, Missouri Parks Association; Missouri Park and Recreation Association; The Nature Conservancy; Sierra Club Missouri Chapter; and the Conservation Federation of Missouri.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that if a sale is ordered by a court, then the proceeds would return to the Federal Department of the Interior for use in various projects including environmental projects involving lead contamination.

Testifying on the bill was Mike Sutherland, Department of Natural Resources.

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.