

HCS HB 2669 -- MISSOURI WATER

SPONSOR: Diehl

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Rural Community Development by a vote of 5 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2669.

This bill specifies that all information provided by a major water user to the Department of Natural Resources' Geological Survey Division from the filed registration document is confidential and can not be released by the Division to the public or disclosed in response to a records request. However, the Division may disclose in the aggregate for each county the number of major water users and the amount of water used and may disclosure information in response to a subpoena or court order. Any employee who purposely or knowingly discloses confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action by the Division and is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

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

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that since there is no penalty, some farmers who meet the criteria to be classified as a major water user are not reporting their water usage. Individual farmers do not want to provide personally identifiable information that could be disclosed to anyone who requests it. This bill would protect the personal information of these farmers, therefore, leading to more accurate water usage for the Department.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Diehl; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Soybean; Missouri Corn Growers Association; and the Missouri Cattlemens Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that entities in the State are preparing to export water out of the State and by protecting the identity of major water users, this bill would hide companies that are exporting water.

Testifying in person against the bill was Lisa Pannett, Armorvine.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the Department uses the information provided by major water users to accurately quantify the use of water by industry and needs. This helps the Department work with other Federal and State agencies. Since the beginning of

2024, the Department has received four sunshine requests for this information.

Testifying in person on the bill was TJ Graven, Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

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.