

HCS HJR 92 -- ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

SPONSOR: Hovis

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Pensions by a vote of 8 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HJR 92.

This Constitutional amendment would, upon voter approval, authorize the levying of costs and fees to support salaries and benefits for law enforcement personnel, including sheriffs and former sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys and former prosecuting attorneys, and circuit attorneys and former circuit attorneys.

This bill is similar to HJR 64 (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 without this constitutional fix the funding for the retirement system will run out within 10 years. Adding the proposed language to the Missouri Constitution will enshrine the importance of the sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys, and circuit attorneys as significant contributors to the administration of justice.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Hovis; Adam L. Warren; Melissa Lorts, Missouri Sheriffs Retirement System; Missouri Sheriffs United; and Dwayne Carey.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is a differences in civil cases and criminal cases and adding this language for criminal cases creates a pervasive incentive to seek out criminals simply to fund a retirement. Currently, certain offenses already have fines and just the opportunity to defend oneself in court can have a significant cost. Spreading the cost of retirement across the community as a whole rather than on the backs of lower income criminals would be a better solution.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri State Conference NAACP; and Arnie Dienoff.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that this language would not create a fee or fine for a non guilty plea just for a conviction.

Testifying in person on the bill was Jason Shellabarger.

This bill is similar to HJR 64 (2023).

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.