

HCS HB 81 -- MISSOURI INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE EXCHANGE

SPONSOR: Johnson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Committee on Emerging Issues in Agriculture by a vote of 13 to 0.

This substitute allows the Department of Agriculture to contract with an Internet website development company to build and maintain the Missouri International Agricultural Exchange website. The website is to contain content approved by the department to promote Missouri agricultural products and services to international agricultural buyers.

In its main provisions, the substitute:

(1) Requires the exchange to allow Missouri-based agricultural sellers to post their products produced in Missouri on the website at no charge to assist in marketing to international buyers. All sellers must register through the website and show proof of Missouri residency and provide any additional information required by the department;

(2) Specifies that the state has exclusive ownership rights of all content on the exchange, but the website developer may use all informational content provided by the department, add to the content, and apply search engine optimization to the website's content to achieve a high search engine ranking;

(3) Allows the website developer to sell advertising on the website to any entity that will benefit from marketing to international agricultural producers or buyers. The developer will be responsible for all costs associated with the development, marketing, and maintenance of the website and will retain all advertising revenues obtained from the website. The developer is prohibited from selling advertising to any entity that is not related to agriculture or furthers the interest of certain content types;

(4) Requires the website developer to have a proven experience and expertise in search engine optimization as determined by the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Economic Development and to provide evidence of website development projects that increased search engine rankings for the client;

(5) Requires the Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Development, to review all applications and award an annual contract for the development, design, marketing, and maintenance of the website with annual contract

renewals for continuing upgrades, marketing, and maintenance of the website; and

(6) Authorizes the Department of Agriculture to terminate a contract at its discretion. Any developer may have his contract terminated for failure to operate under the department's guidelines for the website. If the contract is terminated the department will assume ownership of all site-related domain names. If a contract is terminated, the department must award a new contract in accordance with the procedures for awarding the initial contract.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that Missouri is sixteenth in the country for exports of agricultural products and this website would be one way for the producers of Missouri agricultural products to connect with international buyers.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Johnson.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that Missouri currently only has the AgriMissouri website, which is aimed at connecting producers with domestic buyers.

Testifying on the bill was Department of Agriculture.