

HCS SCS SB 578 -- FUNERAL PROTESTS

SPONSOR: Shields (Rucker)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 11 to 0 with 1 present.

This substitute establishes the Spc. Edward Lee Myers' Law which makes it a class B misdemeanor to picket or protest within 300 feet of any church, cemetery, or funeral establishment within one hour prior to the commencement of any funeral and until one hour following the cessation of any funeral. Any subsequent violation will be a class A misdemeanor.

The substitute contains an emergency clause.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that protesting at a veteran's funeral is extremely disturbing to family and friends. Although an individual has a right to have an opinion about a certain issue, the desecration of a military funeral should be a crime.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Shields; Missouri Family Network; Missouri Baptist Convention; Marine Corps League, Department of Missouri; and Missouri Police Chiefs Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that it limits a person's ability to express his or her views and restricts his or her right to convey a message.

Testifying against the bill was American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas and Western Missouri.

Kristina Jenkins, Legislative Analyst