

HCS HB 2297 -- KANSAS CITY ZOOLOGICAL DISTRICT

SPONSOR: Zerr (Molendorp)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Committee on Tourism by a vote of 10 to 0.

This substitute authorizes the establishment of the Kansas City Zoological District which may be composed of the counties of Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte at the option of the voters of each county. Each member county may impose, upon voter approval, a sales tax of up to one-quarter of 1% for the financial support of zoological activities within the district. The district will be governed by a commission comprised of one member of the governing body of each county that is part of the district; one member of the Kansas City, Missouri Board of Parks and Recreation; and five members of the executive committee of the Friends of the Zoo, Incorporated, one of which will be the executive director.

The administrative expenses of the district incurred during the first six months after its creation must be appropriated to the commission by the member counties; thereafter, the district will be financed by the sales tax revenues collected and deposited into the newly created Kansas City Zoological District Sales Tax Trust Fund. Five years after its creation, the commission will be authorized to borrow money for the construction, operation, improvement, and maintenance of zoological facilities. The commission must submit an annual report to the governing body of each member county; the Kansas City, Missouri Board of Parks and Recreation; and the Friends of the Zoo, Incorporated detailing the commission's operations and transactions.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2011, FY 2012, and FY 2013.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill allows the four counties in which Kansas City is located to establish a regional district to provide additional revenue for the zoo and increase tourism. This revenue will allow the zoo to expand infrastructure and animal habitats for a better experience and hopefully be equal to the zoos in Omaha and St. Louis. During the poor economy in 2009, attendance at the Kansas City Zoo increased 18% because it's an affordable, all-day family activity. When the Royals play in Kansas City, attendance increases because people who are in town for the game often also go to the zoo. A zoo is a vital asset for tourism.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Molendorp; and Randy Wisthoff, Kansas City Zoo.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying say that the City of Kansas City has passed a resolution supporting the bill.

Testifying on the bill was Bill Bates.