

HCS HB 1186 & 1147 -- ENGLISH ONLY DRIVER'S LICENSE EXAMINATIONS

SPONSOR: Nolte (Parkinson)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on International Trade and Job Creation by a vote of 8 to 4.

This substitute requires Missouri driver's license examinations to only be administered in English so that the applicant can demonstrate his or her ability to sufficiently understand highway traffic signs and safety warnings. The Director of the Department of Revenue cannot supply or permit the use of language interpreters, except sign language interpreters, in connection with the required written and driving tests.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on General Revenue Fund in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015. Estimated Income on Other State Funds of \$52,580 in FY 2013, \$0 in FY 2014, and \$0 in FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bills are a safety measure designed to ensure that people driving on Missouri roads can understand traffic signs, safety warnings, and communicate with emergency personnel and law enforcement.

Testifying for the bills were Representatives Parkinson and Gatschenberger.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bills say that, by impeding an immigrant's ability to drive, the bills present an obstacle for a legal immigrant to assimilate into United States society by removing the immigrant's ability to maintain a normal lifestyle. The bills do nothing to ensure that all drivers understand English because a foreign visitor is allowed to drive using his or her home country license while visiting Missouri.

Testifying against the bills were State Farm Insurance Companies; Missouri Insurance Coalition; Catholic Charities Archdiocese of St. Louis; American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri; Missouri Catholic Conference; Service Employees International Union, Missouri/Kansas State Council; Jelenia Mujanovic; Michael Havranek; Maria Teresa Mendez; Cristina Martinez; Nohemi Alvarez-Landa; Vanessa Crawford, Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates; and Lynda Callon, Westside CAN Center.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bills say that taking a driver's license examination in a language other than English was first allowed in the early 1960's and was more a matter of convenience than safety.

Testifying on the bills was State Highway Patrol.