

HB 526 -- RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

SPONSOR: Franklin

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

This bill creates rural regional development grants. The total grants are not to exceed \$5 million on an annual basis.

Grants may be provided to rural regional development groups that:

- (1) Track job creation and investment in a region using quantitative measures of progress toward preestablished goals;
- (2) Establish a process for enrolling commercial and industrial development sites in the region in the state-certified sites program or maintain a list of state-certified commercial and industrial development sites in the region;
- (3) Measure the skills of the region's workforce;
- (4) Provide an organizational chart demonstrating that private businesses and local governmental and educational officials are involved in the group; and
- (5) Provide documentation of the group's financial activities for the current year.

A development group must not qualify for a rural regional development grant if:

- (1) The group's region includes a county or portion of another state outside the state of Missouri; or
- (2) The group maintains an operating budget greater than \$250,000.

Grant applications must only be submitted by a regional planning commission for economic development authorities recognized by the commission as an economic development agency in the counties it represents.

Grants cannot exceed \$150,000 and no more than two grants can be awarded to any one of the 19 regions created by Chapter 251, RSMo.

Grants to groups in operation for two years or more must provide or raise a \$1 match for every \$3 of state funds provided by the grant. Grants to groups in operation for less than two years must provide or raise a \$1 match for every \$1 of state funds provided by the

grant.

PROPONENTS: Currently, much of the state's economic development spending is focused in the urban areas of Missouri. Supporters say that this bill would help fund economic development studies and projects in rural areas of the state.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Franklin; Brian Meisel; and Missouri Small Business and Technology Development Centers.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.