

SB 216 -- FIRST RESPONDER POLITICAL ACTIVITY

SPONSOR: Silvey (Hinson)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 15 to 0.

This bill specifies that no political subdivision of the state can prohibit any first responder from engaging in any political activity while off duty and not in uniform, from being a candidate for elected or appointed public office, or from holding the office unless the political activity or candidacy is otherwise prohibited by state or federal law.

Currently, an employee or officer of the Kansas City Police Department is prohibited from soliciting any assessment, contribution, or payment for any political purpose from any other employee or officer and from soliciting for any purpose in any building or room occupied for the discharge of the official duties of the department. The bill repeals these provisions and specifies that no employee or officer of the department is allowed to solicit for any political purpose in any building occupied for the discharge of the official duties of the department. It also repeals the provision that prohibits an employee or officer from giving, paying, lending, or contributing any part of his or her salary, compensation, money, or other valuable thing to any person on account of or to be applied to the promotion of any political party, political club, or any other political purpose.

Currently, an employee or officer of the Kansas City Police Department is prohibited from belonging to a political party committee, being a ward committeeman or committeewoman, or making or soliciting contributions of any kind for political activity. The bill repeals these provisions.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill guarantees important First Amendment rights and allows first responders to participate in politics in the same manner as other employees. First responders should be able to have these same rights when they're off-duty and not in uniform.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hinson, Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters, St. Louis Police Officers Association, and Missouri State Fraternal Order of Police.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.