

HB 1313 -- MEET IN MISSOURI ACT

SPONSOR: Rowden

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Commerce by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill establishes the Meet in Missouri Act and creates the Major Economic Convention Event in Missouri Fund to be used for the administration of the act. For major convention plans that meet all the requirements of the act, a grant must be paid from the fund by the Department of Economic Development to the eligible commission at the requested date. The grant must be deposited in a separate, segregated account of the commission, and the commission must agree to hold the funds until the major convention event has occurred and not disburse the funds until the required report has been submitted.

The department director must not disburse a grant until he or she has approved a written major convention plan submitted by an eligible commission. The plan must meet specified conditions before it can be approved. Upon verification that the plan complies with the conditions, the department director must issue a certificate of approval to the commission stating the date on which the grant will be disbursed and the amount of the grant, which must be equal to the eligible event costs listed in the approved plan. The amount of any one grant cannot exceed more than 50% of the costs of hosting the major convention event or \$1 million, whichever is less.

The department director must annually request that the General Assembly appropriate to the fund an amount equal to the total of all approved grants scheduled for disbursement that year. The appropriation cannot exceed \$3 million in any year.

Within 180 days of the conclusion of any major convention event for which a grant was disbursed, the commission that received the grant must provide a written report to the department director detailing the final amount of eligible event costs incurred and the attendance figures. If the final amount of the event costs is less than the amount of the grant, the commission must refund the excess that is greater than 50% of the actual costs. If the actual attendance figures for the event is less than the 50% requirement but more than 25%, the commission must refund a portion of the grant equal to the excess received that is greater than the actual percentage of out-of-state attendance. If 25% or less of the attendees meet the requirement, the entire amount of the grant must be refunded.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that Missouri hosts over 22.3 million visitors each year and that hosting conventions has become a very competitive industry. The bill allows cities to compete more effectively to bring large conferences to the state.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rowden; Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce; Victor Allred, Missouri Restaurant Association/Visit KC Board Member; Joseph T. Ward, Greater St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau; Kathleen M. Ratcliffe, St. Louis Convention and Visitors Commission; and Ronnie Burt, Visit Kansas City.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.