

HB 1880 -- RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

SPONSOR: Trent

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules-Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill declares that the expansion of broadband services to be within the best interests of the citizens of Missouri and a public purpose. In furtherance of expanding broadband throughout Missouri, the bill states the intent of the General Assembly to encourage agreements between various parties and rural electric cooperatives to expand rural broadband services. Such agreements may provide for the nonexclusive use of rural electric cooperative infrastructure and easements. This bill does not grant the Public Service Commission jurisdiction over any contract or agreement that it would not otherwise have.

This bill is the same as SB 980 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the availability of Internet services is essential to our daily lives, especially for individuals living in rural communities. For the aging population in particular, access to broadband is necessary for telehealth and communication.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Trent;, Missouri Corn Growers Association; Missouri Cattleman's Association; AARP; Missouri Bankers Association; Louis Ripp, Northeast Missouri Development Partnership; Brent Stewart, Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives; and the Missouri Soybean Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.