

SS SB 213 -- STATE DEMOGRAPHER

SPONSOR: Hegeman

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 5 to 3.

This bill prohibits the state demographer entrusted to draw redistricting maps and his or her spouse or children from accepting any gift, service, or item of value from any interested party. The demographer is also prohibited from accepting any remuneration whatsoever from any party except the State of Missouri for any act connected with the redistricting process, from employing or contracting with any other person including legal counsel, except the Office of the Attorney General or the Office of Administration, for redistricting assistance, and from communicating about the redistricting process except as allowed by the public comment portal established in this bill. The demographer is prohibited from registration as a lobbyist for two years after the end of his or her term and is subject to the conflict of interest and prohibition on consulting work statutes applying to public officials. Financial disclosure requirements are also stated in the bill.

Currently, the Missouri Constitution requires a nonpartisan state demographer to draw redistricting maps on the basis of specified formulas and criteria. This bill requires the demographer to establish a "Redistricting Public Comment Portal," to accept comments, maps, or other communications from the general public or interested parties. Submissions to the portal must disclose whether the entity making the submission was responsible for its content and whether or not the submission was funded by contributors. If a submission was funded, then the identity of the contributors shall be disclosed. Records will be permanently maintained by the state records center and archives upon the expiration of the demographer's term in office.

Violations of the bill may be investigated by the Attorney General which is granted the power to issue civil investigative demands. It is a class A misdemeanor to spoil or destroy materials subject to these demands and courts may enforce demands with their contempt power. The office may issue cease and desist orders to prevent unlawful activity and the violation of the order is a class E felony. The courts are granted power to award a civil penalty of the not more than \$1000 per violation to enforce the provisions of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will provide the general

public with a transparent redistricting process and ensure a fair process. The demographer should be subject to similar ethics rules and conflict of interest principles as other public officials in order to avoid any appearance of corruption or improper influence.

Testifying for the bill was Senator Hegeman.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.