

HB 1768 -- RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS FUNDING

SPONSOR: Riggs

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Economic Development by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee of Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill requires the Department of Economic Development to maintain a record of all federal grants awarded to entities for the purposes of providing, maintaining, and expanding rural broadband in the state of Missouri. In cases in which funds have been retained, withheld or not distributed due to failure to meet performance standards or other criteria, the department must seek to have the funds awarded to another eligible, qualified Missouri broadband provider.

This bill is the same as HCS HB 1162 (2019).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there are currently over 1 million Missourians without access to broadband services. This bill would keep federal funds in Missouri for the purpose of expanding broadband access. Supporters also claimed that this bill would assist rural Missourians in terms of economic development, health, education, and other factors that require access to broadband.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Riggs; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Association of Municipal Utilities; Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives; Historic Revitalization For Missouri; and Western Governors University.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.