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Download date	2026-03-12 19:59:15
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/29275

Legislators Write Bill To Bar I-40 From Park

From The Commercial Appeal
Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, March 9. — A legislative effort is under way to prevent the routing of the east-west expressway leg

through Memphis' Overton Park.

Representative D. J. 'Jack' Smith of Memphis has had a bill prepared that evidently would overturn the firm decision of Gov. Buford Ellington and Highway Commissioner Charles Speight to Route I-40 through the park.

Smith could not be reached Thursday afternoon, but circulation of the bill was confirmed by Representatives Curtis Person, Max Lucas and William Bruce.

All three signed the measure Person said, in addition to Representative Robert Hawks, Smith and four other members of the Shelby delegation whom Person could not recall.

The bill, general in nature, would have to be acted upon by the entire Legislature. However, it would be limited in its effect to Shelby County.

It provides, Person said, that no state funds may be spent for routing a road through a public park.

The chances of the bill getting unanimous delegation approval are remote. Representative W. K. Weldon, said, "I'd have to be against it."

Without unanimous delegation support, the bill's prospect of passage would not be good. However, it could be passed.

Even then, Gov. Buford Ellington might well veto the measure, since he and Speight took a firm position on the issue Feb. 3.

The Governor's office said the situation had been reviewed and a "final decision" made that the park route "is the only feasible location for the highway."

The Smith bill was drawn after Mrs. John C. Hines of 1396 Carr appeared before the delegation and made an appeal to the lawmakers for help in keeping the superhighway out of the park.

She asked that:

The Legislature not appropriate money for that leg of the expressway programmed to run through the park.

A bill be introduced to insure that no expressway would ever cross the park.

If an east-west expressway is needed, that some alternate route be decided upon.

Mrs. Hines said she doesn't know why "anyone in his right mind" would route a superhighway through Overton.

Citing legal action in New Orleans to keep a highway out of the historic French Quarter—she was critical of newspapers for not carrying stories about that action—Mrs. Hines said, "Overton Park's time has not run out."

CA 3-10-67

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