

Tort Reform

The first bill the Senate passed this week was SB 591, tort reform, relating to expert witnesses.

Tort reform is critical to both Missouri's businesses and the state's economic future.

SB 591 (Parsons) ensures that individuals who testify as expert witnesses in court do in fact have the expertise they claim to have. Many times expert witnesses have been called to testify in accordance to the wishes of the attorneys who hire them and their side of the facts. SB 591 adopts a standard for expert witnesses that mirrors both our Federal System and forty other states.

The State of Missouri needs to analyze key tort reform in a variety of areas including. But not limited to: employment law, comparative fault, punitive judgements and evidentiary standard. Progress would be reflected if we implement a plan that aligns us with other states that have a more balanced and competitive litigation climate. Businesses know if they move to Missouri it's an open book when subject to a law suit. As always, bad for our economy and jobs.

Although arguments can be made on either side of tort reform, not having a cap encourages lawsuits and inflates medical costs. One resolution suggested is "loser pays" - whoever loses the lawsuit must pay both sides' legal expenses. It would have a long term effect of reducing and/or eliminating frivolous lawsuits.

Voter ID

This week the House approved and sent to the Senate two pieces of legislation designed to require a valid form of identification in order to vote.

HJR 53 (Dugger) One bill would change the Constitution to allow a system of voter ID. If approved by the Legislature, Missouri voters would also have to approve.

HB 1631 (Alferman) The second bill would implement the system of voter ID if the Constitutional Amendment is approved by voters. This bill would require voters present a pre-specified form of ID to vote as well as to require the state to pay for individuals to obtain a valid ID if they do not have one - or to obtain the required documents for an ID. If an individual did not have a valid ID they would still be able to vote a provisional ballot.

Both measures moved to the Senate for discussion.

See our website for additional information <http://mofrw.org> .

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