



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

John Loudon
7th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 422
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**For Immediate Release:
March 30, 2005**

**Contact: Mark Meuser
(573) 751-9763**

Governor Signs Sen. Loudon's Workers' Compensation Reform Legislation

JEFFERSON CITY— Legislation instituting sweeping changes to the state workers' compensation system was signed into law today by Gov. Matt Blunt.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, announced his great satisfaction at the final passage of the legislation, which is the result of many years of hard work by many.

"This bill has been 11 years in the making," Loudon said. "But the effect it will have on reducing workers' compensation abuse makes all that time and effort worthwhile."

Senate Bill 1 tightens the definition of work-related injury to ensure that the Missouri workers' compensation system only covers valid claims. The bill requires that work be "the prevailing factor" rather than a "substantial factor" in the injury.

The new law also reduces the amount workers can collect if they are injured while in violation of safety regulations. If an injury occurs while someone is traveling to or from work, he or she will not be compensated, and those who are injured while legally drunk on the job will not receive compensation either.

"These common-sense provisions will stem the tide of fraudulent workers' compensation claims," Loudon said. "No longer will Missouri operate a system unfair and unfriendly to state businesses."

The bill also:

--Allows employers to have employees use vacation or sick days while being tested for injury.

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--Denies compensation if workers are fired for "post-injury misconduct."

--Reduces the amount a worker can collect if they are injured while in violation of safety regulations.

--Limits what lawyers can collect from injured workers.

--Requires a strict interpretation of the workers' compensation laws and place the burden of proof on the injured employee to weed out illegitimate claims.

--Increases the number of workers' compensation judges from 26 to 40, and establishes a review process that allows judges to be voted off the bench by a panel, rather than serving for life.

"These changes are necessary to curb fraudulent claims, which result in costly litigation," Loudon said. "Meanwhile, they will uphold a workers' compensation system that justly serves employees who are legitimately injured on the job."

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