

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL NO. 360

91ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR SCHNEIDER.

Read 1st time January 23, 2001, and 1,000 copies ordered printed.

TERRY L. SPIELER, Secretary.

0974S.011

AN ACT

To repeal sections 302.535 and 479.500, RSMo 2000, relating to court procedures, and to enact in lieu thereof two new sections relating to the same subject.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Sections 302.535 and 479.500, RSMo 2000, are repealed and two new sections enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as sections 302.535 and 479.500, to read as follows:

302.535. 1. Any person aggrieved by a decision of the department may file a petition for trial de novo by the circuit court. The burden of proof shall be on the state to adduce the evidence. Such trial shall be conducted pursuant to the Missouri rules of civil procedure and not as an appeal of an administrative decision pursuant to chapter 536, RSMo. The petition shall be filed in the circuit court of the county where the arrest occurred. The case shall be decided by the judge sitting without a jury. The presiding judge of the circuit court may assign a [traffic judge, pursuant to section 479.500, RSMo 1994, a] circuit judge or an associate circuit judge to hear such petition.

2. The filing of a petition for trial de novo shall not result in a stay of the suspension or revocation order. But upon the filing of such petition, a restricted driving privilege for the limited purpose of driving in connection with the petitioner's business, occupation, employment, or formal program of secondary, postsecondary or higher education shall be issued by the department if the person's driving record shows no prior alcohol related enforcement contact during the immediately preceding five years. Such limited driving privilege shall terminate on the date of the disposition of the petition for trial de novo.

3. In addition to the limited driving privilege as permitted in subsection 2 of this section,

EXPLANATION--Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in this bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

the department may upon the filing of a petition for trial de novo issue a restricted driving privilege for the limited purpose of driving in connection with the petitioner's business, occupation, employment, or formal program of secondary, postsecondary or higher education. In determining whether to issue such a restrictive driving privilege, the department shall consider the number and the seriousness of prior convictions and the entire driving record of the driver.

4. Such time of restricted driving privilege pending disposition of trial de novo shall be counted toward any time of restricted driving privilege imposed pursuant to section 302.525. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent a person from maintaining his restricted driving privilege for an additional sixty days in order to meet the conditions imposed by section 302.540 for reinstating a person's driver's license.

479.500. 1. In the twenty-first judicial circuit, a majority of the circuit judges, en banc, may establish a traffic court, which shall be a division of the circuit court, and may authorize the appointment of not more than three municipal judges who shall be known as traffic judges. The traffic judges shall be appointed by a traffic court judicial commission consisting of the presiding judge of the circuit, who shall be the chair, one circuit judge elected by the circuit judges, one associate circuit judge elected by the associate circuit judges of the circuit, and two members appointed by the county executive of St. Louis County, each of whom shall represent one of the two political parties casting the highest number of votes at the next preceding gubernatorial election. The procedures and operations of the traffic court judicial commission shall be established by circuit court rule.

2. Traffic judges may be authorized to act as commissioners to hear in the first instance nonfelony violations of state law involving motor vehicles, and such other offenses as may be provided by circuit court rule. Traffic judges may also be authorized to hear in the first instance violations of county and municipal ordinances involving motor vehicles, and other county ordinance violations, as provided by circuit court rule.

3. In the event that a county municipal court is established pursuant to section 66.010, RSMo, which takes jurisdiction of county ordinance violations the circuit court may then authorize the appointment of no more than two traffic judges authorized to hear municipal ordinance violations other than county ordinance violations, and to act as commissioner to hear in the first instance nonfelony violations of state law involving motor vehicles, and such other offenses as may be provided by rule. [These traffic court judges also may be authorized to act as commissioners to hear in the first instance petitions to review decisions of the department of revenue or the director of revenue filed pursuant to sections 302.309, 302.311, 302.535 and 302.750, RSMo.]

4. In establishing a traffic court, the circuit may be divided into such sectors as may be established by a majority of the circuit and associate circuit judges, en banc. The traffic court in each sector shall hear those cases arising within the territorial limits of the sector unless a case arising within another sector is transferred as provided by operating procedures.

5. Traffic judges shall be licensed to practice law in this state and shall serve at the pleasure of a majority of the circuit and associate circuit judges, en banc, and shall be residents of St. Louis County, and shall receive from the state as annual compensation an amount equal to one-third of the annual compensation of an associate circuit judge. Each judge shall devote approximately one-third of his working time to the performance of his duties as a traffic judge. Traffic judges shall not accept or handle cases in their practice of law which are inconsistent with their duties as a traffic judge and shall not be a judge or prosecutor for any other court. Traffic judges shall not be considered state employees and shall not be members of the state employees' or judicial retirement system or be eligible to receive any other employment benefit accorded state employees or judges.

6. A majority of the judges, en banc, shall establish operating procedures for the traffic court which shall provide for regular sessions in the evenings after 6:00 p.m. and for Saturday or other sessions as efficient operation and convenience to the public may require. Proceedings in the traffic court, except when a judge is acting as a commissioner pursuant to this section, shall be conducted as provided in supreme court rule 37. The hearing shall be before a traffic judge without jury, and the judge shall assume an affirmative duty to determine the merits of the evidence presented and the defenses of the defendant and may question parties and witnesses. No term of imprisonment or confinement may be assessed by a traffic judge. In the event a jury trial is requested, the cause shall be certified to the circuit court for trial by jury as otherwise provided by law. Clerks and computer personnel shall be assigned as needed for the efficient operation of the court.

7. In establishing operating procedure, provisions shall be made for appropriate circumstances whereby defendants may enter not guilty pleas and obtain trial dates by telephone or written communication without personal appearance, or to plead guilty and deliver by mail or electronic transfer or other approved method the specified amount of the fine and costs as otherwise provided by law, within a specified period of time.

8. Operating procedures shall be provided for electronic recording of proceedings, except that if adequate recording equipment is not provided at county expense, then, in that event, a person aggrieved by a judgment of a traffic judge or commissioner shall have the right of a trial de novo. The procedures for perfecting the right of a trial de novo shall be the same as that provided under sections 512.180 to 512.320, RSMo, except that the provisions of subsection 2 of section 512.180, RSMo, shall not apply to such cases.

9. The circuit court shall only have the authority to appoint two commissioners with the jurisdiction provided in subsection 3 of this section.

10. All costs to establish and operate a county municipal court under section 66.010, RSMo, and this section shall be borne by such county.

Unofficial

Bill

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