

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

# SENATE BILL NO. 268

92ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY SENATORS LOUDON AND GOODE.

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Read 1st time January 15, 2003, and 1,000 copies ordered printed.

TERRY L. SPIELER, Secretary.

0169S.021

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## AN ACT

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To amend chapter 537, RSMo, by adding thereto one new section relating to civil actions.

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

Section A. Chapter 537, RSMo, is amended by adding thereto one new section, to be known as section 537.800, to read as follows:

**537.800. 1. Any action seeking money damages against a person for conduct or speech undertaken or made in connection with a public hearing or public meeting, in a quasi-judicial proceeding before a tribunal or decision-making body of any political subdivision of the state is subject to a special motion to dismiss, motion for judgment on the pleadings, or motion for summary judgment that shall be considered by the court on a priority or expedited basis to ensure the early consideration of the issues raised by the motion and to prevent the unnecessary expense of litigation. Upon the filing of any special motion described in this subsection, all discovery shall be suspended pending a decision on the motion by the court and the exhaustion of all appeals regarding the special motion.**

**2. If the rights afforded by this section are raised as an affirmative defense and if a court grants a motion to dismiss, a motion for judgment on the pleadings or a motion for summary judgment filed within ninety days of the filing of the moving party's answer, the court shall award reasonable attorney fees and costs incurred by the moving party in defending the action. If the court finds that a special motion to dismiss or motion for summary judgment is frivolous or solely intended to cause unnecessary delay, the court shall award costs and reasonable attorney fees to the party prevailing on the motion.**

3. Any party shall have the right to an expedited appeal from a trial court order on the special motions described in subsection 2 of this section or from a trial court's failure to rule on the motion on an expedited basis.

4. As used in this section, a "public meeting in a quasi-judicial proceeding" means and includes any meeting established and held by a state or local governmental entity, including without limitations, meetings or presentations before state, county, city, town or village councils, planning commissions, review boards or commissions.

5. Nothing in this section limits or prohibits the exercise of a right or remedy of a party granted pursuant to another constitutional, statutory, common law or administrative provision, including civil actions for defamation.

6. If any provision of this section or the application of any provision of this section to a person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this section that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this section are severable.

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