

Senator John Loudon's SLAPP Legislation Wins Senate Approval

Bill Shielding Citizens From Public Officials' Retribution Moves to House

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Senate this week gave final approval to legislation sponsored by Senator John Loudon, R-Ballwin, that shields citizens from “SLAPP” (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation) lawsuits. Loudon’s bill now goes to the House of Representatives. House passage moves the measure to the governor’s desk.

Elected officials filing SLAPP suits against private citizens are ostensibly using the courts to try and silence public criticism and suppress petitioning activities. Loudon’s corrective legislation, SB 807, provides for swift legal proceedings to dismiss SLAPP lawsuits launched by members of local or state governing bodies. The legislation also allows citizens who have successfully warded off SLAPP suits to recover attorney fees and court costs incurred by having to spend time, energy and money defending their right to be heard.

“Speaking out on the performance of elected officials and petitioning governments for change are two guaranteed freedoms granted by our nation’s Constitution,” Loudon said. “The appropriate response to criticism is rebuttal, not litigation.”

Loudon notes that while a judge last year dismissed a libel lawsuit filed by Creve Coeur's mayor claiming residents had engaged in libel and slander by offering criticism, many givers of opinion have unjustly been forced to become givers of testimony.

United States Constitution

Bill of Rights

Amendment I – The Five Freedoms

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”