

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Past Political Losses Have Led Senate Democrats to Ignore Missouri Citizens

Vote against workers' comp emergency clause will only hurt Missouri workers

JEFFERSON CITY — On Wednesday, House Democrats elected to leave Missouri's workers' compensation system in flux by rejecting the emergency clause on a simple bill that only cleans up an unintended "glitch" in the work comp law. My colleague, Senator Tim Green, has circulated a letter defending that position, which I find indefensible.

The minority party had a choice to make when the infamous glitch was discovered and then became public. No one argued that the glitch was not a problem both for business and for workers. It needed to be fixed and would be fixed; the only question was when. Because of the untimely death of Sen. Larry Taylor, the Republicans were one vote short of the supermajority needed to pass an "emergency clause," which would have made the bill effective immediately, as opposed to delaying repair for 90 days.

Senator Green, minority leader Maida Coleman, and the rest of the Senate Democrats took the position that because they were mad about "losing" to the majority Republicans with the passage of SB1, the bill I sponsored, they were not going to "help" the Republicans by "giving us" one vote necessary to pass the emergency clause. Their decision missed the point that the losers are not the Republicans or Governor Blunt, but the people of Missouri.

The most vocal and perhaps least reported victims were the schools. Their workers' compensation cooperative signaled a 15 percent rate reduction, which would be on hold until this fix took effect. The pleas of school superintendents around the state, who had plenty of ways to better spend that money, sadly fell on deaf Democrat ears.

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It matters not how you feel about last session's work comp reform bill – that ship has sailed. Keeping the work comp law in a state of uncertainty for three months doesn't change that. The delay caused by defeat of the emergency clause serves no one – employers, employees, insurers and school children collectively may suffer.

The political process is not for the faint of heart. Over 11 years of lawmaking I have won many battles and lost others, and so has Senator Green. This battle is over. True statesmanship requires putting yesterday's political losses behind us and keeping good public policy ahead of us. Our definitions of what that "policy" is will vary. That the policy should benefit the "public" over partisan interests should not.

Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, represents Missouri's 7th District

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