



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Bill Improving Workplace Safety Laws Signed by Governor

JEFFERSON CITY—Legislation handled by Sen. Luann Ridgeway, R-Smithville, to enhance safety standards in the workplace was recently signed by Gov. Matt Blunt. House Bill 1456 will improve the safety environment for all employees by enabling employers to have zero-tolerance policies for drug and alcohol use at work, all while ensuring that employers will still be held financially accountable when they fire employees whose conduct does not warrant termination.

Unemployment insurance was established to provide temporary compensation to those who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Many individuals have misused the well-meaning system by claiming unemployment benefits when drug use or chronic absenteeism was the reason for their employment termination.

“Missouri should have zero tolerance when it comes to this type of system abuse,” Ridgeway said. “I believe that employers have a right to dismiss employees who do not abide by the drug-free workplace standards or those who consistently fail to show up for work.”

Among its many provisions, HB 1456 declares that if an employer has an established attendance policy and the worker’s many absences or frequent tardiness are a direct violation of the policy, the employer will not have to pay for unemployment benefits. Furthermore, the measure enacts several changes making it more difficult for workers who test positive for alcohol or drugs to receive unemployment benefits. Employers will have more definitive guidelines in conducting pre-employment screening for drugs and alcohol.

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“These changes are necessary because whenever compensation goes to someone scamming the system who doesn’t deserve it, employers are unable to offer pay raises and other incentives to the employees who *do* play by the rules,” Ridgeway said. “The passage of this new law helps fulfill a promise made by legislative leaders to improve the job market and the economy while still protecting the best interests of workers.”

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