***This Week in the Missouri Senate* Script: SB 66**

This week in the Missouri Senate, we review a workers’ compensation measure that will soon become law in Missouri…

**Nat Snd 1 / Runs :05 / OC: that Senate Bill (2x).**

*“I move that Senate Bill 66, with Senate Committee Substitute, be taken up for perfection. Senator from Franklin moves that Senate Bill….”*

[Senate Bill 66](http://www.senate.mo.gov/17info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=57095462) will make changes to certain parts of law relating to workers' compensation. The new law will take effect on Aug. 28.

When the proposal was first-taken up for Missouri Senate dissection on March 6, sponsor — Sen. Dave Schatz of Sullivan — explained to his colleagues how maximum medical improvement, or MMI, is the biggest piece of the bill…

**Schatz 1 / Runs :20 / OC: than originally intended.**

*“In workers’ compensation cases, claimants are often encouraged to get a third, fourth and beyond, medical opinion to continue to draw temporary benefits. This situation means that both the worker and the employer face an uncertainty for a prolonged period of time. This is the current situation, and it’s cost the employer, and it leaves the worker without permanent certainty. The situation also means that temporary payments are lasting far longer than originally intended.”*

During discussion, Sen. Scott Sifton of Affton mentioned there can be differing opinions on maximum medical improvement…

**Sifton 2 / Runs :23 / OC: hear from both.**

*“Reasonable minds may differ on, in this case, whether somebody’s reached maximum medical improvement. And, in those contested workers’ compensation proceedings — and I’m not a workers’ compensation lawyer — but, my understanding is that you will have what we call ‘dueling experts,’ where you have somebody testifying from the employer’s standpoint, and somebody testifying from the employee’s standpoint. I assume, under current law, the administrative law judge gets to hear from both.”*

Missouri Senate Minority Floor Leader Gina Walsh of Bellefontaine Neighbors adds, in these cases, time is also a factor…

**Walsh 3 / Runs :21 / OC: get that rating.**

*“Upon receipt of a permanent disability rating from the employer’s physician, a claimant shall have a period of nine months — from such date — to acquire a rating from a second physician of his or her own choosing. I talked to some attorneys that work in this field and they said it takes them three to six months to schedule, sometimes, just an appointment to get that rating.”*

It was also on March 6 when Sen. Dan Hegeman of Cosby successfully added an amendment to Senate Bill 66 that relates to benefits that would go to survivors of those who have been killed in the line of duty…

**Hegeman 4 / Runs :18 / OC: and mirrors it.**

*“Line-of-duty death benefits. This is to make sure that the limited resources the survivors receive need not go for unnecessary expenses, [such] as setting up an estate. And, it does make any person eligible — who is not, today — eligible, and does not increase or decrease the benefit level. It takes the federal law language and mirrors it.”*

In addition, the new law will:

* Add regulations for standard — or “[S corporation](https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/s-corporations)” — shareholders with 40 percent, or more, interest in a company;
* Reduce workers’ compensation awards based on drug use; plus
* Add new language on disability payments, death benefits and burial expenses, trust self-insurers, and discharge and discrimination.

And, remember, you can follow these and other issues facing the Missouri Senate by visiting our website: [senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov).

Reporting from the State Capitol, I’m Dean Morgan.