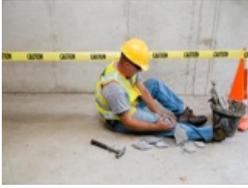


NEW WORKPLACE INJURIES BILL TO PROVIDE HEALING SALVE TO EMPLOYERS



For businesses groaning under the burden of complying with employment laws that are perceived to be heavily loaded in favor of employees, the new bill, limiting civil lawsuits on employers against workplace injuries, comes as a welcome relief. A Missouri House, passed a bill that could limit civil lawsuits, against workplace injuries, on employers. The new legislation has included occupational disease, exclusively under workers compensation and has restricted employees from suing their co-workers for injuries sustained during work. As occupational diseases, would be included in their 'Worker Compensation Packages,' employees would not be able to sue their employers, thereby, curtailing the damages they can seek and collect. The Bill assertively states that "occupational diseases are exclusively covered under workers' compensation laws." However, the company shall not escape liability when the "employee engages in an affirmative negligent act that purposefully and dangerously caused or increased the risk of injury." Even though employers, across the board, have welcomed the Bill, Representative Jacob Hummel, D-St. Louis City, vehemently opposed it and said, that the damages awarded under the workers compensation, did not commiserate with what people with occupational diseases have to confront. In an emotional outburst, he said, he had lost family members owing to toxic exposure, and alleged that companies worried more about their income than they did their employees. "This bill spits in those families' faces," he thundered. "How many lives have been ruined, how many families have been torn apart because those companies didn't care about anything but their profits?" Democrats decried the new bill, calling it an attempt by the Republicans to gut workers compensation and undermine it and feel that it is a middle class economic security that they should not be deprived of. House bill handler, Rep. Todd Richardson, R-Poplar Bluff, said the bill does not limit employees, but is a win-win situation for all. "When you cut through to the meat of this bill, the bill includes provisions that help both employees and the employer," "The bill only puts workers' compensation back its place that it has historically been in the state as the exclusive remedy for workplace injuries." The bill's sponsor, Sen. Tom Dempsey, opined that the bill was a long overdue and he wanted the clause to stop the trend of employees suing their coworkers, "With this co-employee liability, you're seeing more and more cases filed where employees are getting sued by other employees," "I think the emergency clause would have just closed that window sooner." However, the bill will not become law, until Democratic Governor Jay Nixon acts on the bill. If he vetoes the bill, both chambers will need a two-thirds majority to supersede the veto – employees and businesses may just have to put their celebrations on hold till then.