



info@newmoplan.com | 573-635-0782 | PO Box 1524 Jefferson City Missouri 65102

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 8, 2009

For More Information, Contact:
James Harris (573-761-7875)

MISSOURI HOUSE SENDS JUDICIAL REFORM BILL TO SENATE

(Jefferson City, MO) – “The domination of Missouri’s highest courts by special interest is one step closer to going the way of Tom Pendergast,” announced James Harris, Executive Director of Better Courts for Missouri (BCM), after the Missouri House of Representatives gave final approval to House Joint Resolution 10 (HJR 10). HJR 10 is a measure that provides reform in Missouri’s judicial selection system. Pending approval by the Missouri Senate, it will be brought before voters for their approval in an upcoming election.

HJR 10 received initial bipartisan support yesterday and gained additional votes today from both sides of the aisle in the “people’s body.” House Majority Leader Steve Tilley commented, “Allowing voters to decide if they want more accountability and openness in how our judges are selected is one of the more important items that the Missouri Legislature can pass this legislative session.”

The measure now moves to the Missouri Senate where a similar resolution received approval by the Senate’s Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee. Senator Jim Lembke (R, St. Louis) will handle the bill as approval by the senate is sought.

“On behalf of Better Courts for Missouri, as well as the citizens of our great state, I want to thank Representative Cox for his work in sponsoring this bill as well as Speaker Ron Richard and Majority Leader Steve Tilley for their great leadership on this very important issue. They stood up against powerful special interest to put the people first,” stated James Harris.

Missouri’s judicial selection process, known as the Missouri Plan, has been changed several times since its inception. It was placed into the constitution in order to end the manipulation of judicial selection by special interests, mainly Tom Pendergast.

“Today, the very system that was implemented to end the days of Pendergast has resulted in a complex manipulation by a different special interest—the trial attorneys,” stated Harris. “There is no difference in what is happening today than what happened in the days of Pendergast. Now, every judicial appointee is required to be a pawn of the trial attorneys. Today’s manipulation is just as bad—and it must end. Missourians deserve a better system and HJR 10 is a step in that direction,” added Harris.

HJR 10 contains the following provisions:

- (1) Ends secret selection by adding sunshine to the process. The list of applicants for judicial appointments would be a public record and as well as the procedures used.
- (2) Increases the size of the commission to have a citizen majority instead of the current lawyer majority.
- (3) Adds one additional citizen to each judicial selection panel to prevent the ability of special interest in rigging panels and to allow for more diversity.
- (4) Gives the governor the option to veto the first list of candidates provided to him for judicial selection and request the judicial commission to give him a second list of candidates if he or she felt the panel was flawed.
- (5) Makes gubernatorial appointments to Judicial Commissions subject to senate confirmation.

To schedule an interview with James Harris, Executive Director, Better Courts for Missouri, please contact James at 573-761-7875 or james@thejharriscompany.com.

###