

## And Now, The Rest of the Story – What Missouri Lawyers Should Know about a Recent *Daily Record* Article about “Better Courts for Missouri”

According to the *St. Louis Daily Record*, lawyers throughout the state have received, or soon will be receiving, a letter advocating that they request a partial refund of their bar dues. The letter is from a fringe political group, Better Courts for Missouri. The term “group” is loosely applied. Apparently, the group – or shell – consists of less than a handful of people. Its website does not list its members. The group isn’t even a group. They are not an entity, only a fictitious name, registered at the Secretary of State’s Office with the home address of attorney Bill Placke.

The owner of the fictitious name is Missourians for Open and Accountable Judicial Selection, a group with three board members. Even the Internet website Wikipedia rejected the Better Courts for Missouri’s attempt to list themselves in the online encyclopedia, noting that the group’s page was a blatant ad and that it couldn’t prove it was a coalition.

The funding behind Better Courts for Missouri is cloaked by its executive director, attorney Jonathan Bunch. At a recent hearing before the House Special Committee on General Laws, Mr. Bunch, under intense questioning from the committee, refused to disclose his source of funding.

This secretive band of political operatives has originated an initiative proposal that would blatantly politicize Missouri’s Non-Partisan Court Plan. The proposal is an amateurish stab at the heart of our state’s judicial selection system. As an initiative, it is poorly drafted, poorly conceived and would create a three-ring political circus for a judicial selection process.

On one side, you have a fringe group with a poorly developed proposal that would advance their political agenda. On the other, you have the Board of Governors of The Missouri Bar and a growing coalition of well-respected lawyers, major bar associations, business groups and other credible organizations. All recognizing that Missouri’s judiciary has a national reputation for fairness, efficiency and impartiality.

The letter that is being sent to Missouri Bar members from this shell, with its fictitious name, should be regarded by Missouri lawyers for what it is: Part of the ongoing special interest campaign to erode support for the Non-Partisan Court Plan and that of the long list of groups that are committed to reducing the role of politics in judicial selection.

The following is the current and growing list of Non-Partisan Court Plan supporters who are members of the coalition formed by Missourians for Fair and Impartial Courts.

- [AARP Missouri](#)
- 37th Circuit Bar Association
- [American Federation of Teachers — Missouri](#)
- American Jewish Congress, St. Louis Chapter

- [Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis](#)
- [Boone County Bar Association](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City](#)
- Civic Council of Greater Kansas City
- Clay County Bar Association
- Cole County Bar Association
- Committee for County Progress (Jackson County)
- [Committee for Economic Development](#)
- [Defense Research Institute](#)
- Eastern Jackson County Bar Association
- Education Roundtable
- Homeowners Against Deficient Dwellings
- Jewish Community Relations Council
- [Justice at Stake](#)
- Justice Institute of Missouri
- KC Legal
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association
- The Lawyers Association of St. Louis
- [League of Women Voters](#)
- Lincoln County Bar Association
- MAINstream Coalition
- Missouri AFL-CIO
- [Missouri Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers](#)
- Missouri Association of Rural Educators
- Missouri Association of School Administrators
- [Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys](#)
- Missouri Chapter of National Association of Elder Law Attorneys
- [Missouri Municipal League](#)
- Missouri Municipal Attorneys Association
- [Missouri National Education Association](#)
- [Missouri Organization of Defense Lawyers](#)
- Missouri Republican Attorneys for Civil Justice
- [Missouri Retired Teachers Association](#)
- [Missouri School Boards Association](#)
- National Employment Lawyers Association, St. Louis Chapter
- National Employment Lawyers Association, Kansas City Chapter
- Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association

*Honorary co-chairs of this group consist of the following former Missouri Supreme Court judges: John Holstein, Jack Bardgett, Ann Covington, Andrew Jackson Higgins, Edward "Chip" Robertson and Ronnie White*

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