

HB 546 -- JURY DUTY

SPONSOR: Schaaf

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 11 to 0.

This bill exempts from jury duty any woman who is breastfeeding. The woman must provide a written statement to the court certifying that she is actually breastfeeding and requesting that she be excused.

The bill also disqualifies licensed attorneys from jury duty.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will allow mothers to postpone their jury service during the time they are breastfeeding. Because nursing mothers do not feed their infants on a regular schedule, service on a jury would interrupt feeding. If nursing mothers are not able to nurse their infants, the risk of infection to the nursing mother increases. Nursing helps infants fight disease, reduces allergies, and is the ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Schaaf; Nikki Simmons; and Elizabeth Crowley.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the exemption from jury service for attorneys should not be added to the bill. Attorneys should be subject to the peremptory challenges in jury selection and, in some cases, can be a valuable addition to a jury.

Testifying against the bill was Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys.