

HB 2666 -- CIVIL ACTIONS TO PROTECT PUBLIC EXPRESSION

SPONSOR: Keathley

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 8 to 4.

This bill establishes the "Uniform Public Expression Protection Act".

The bill relates to causes of action filed against individuals who exercise certain constitutional rights. The bill specifies that, when a person, defined in the bill as "an individual, estate, trust, partnership, business or nonprofit entity, governmental unit, or other legal entity", has a cause of action filed against the person based upon the person's communication in a governmental proceeding or on an issue under consideration in a governmental proceeding, or when the person exercises the person's right of freedom of speech or of the press, the right to assemble, or the right of association, that person may file a special motion to dismiss the cause of action.

This bill establishes procedures for such special motions to dismiss. The bill specifies under which circumstances a court may award costs, reasonable attorneys' fees, and reasonable litigation expenses. The provisions of the bill apply to civil actions filed on or after August 28, 2026.

This bill is similar to HB 1092 (2025) and HB 1785 (2024).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that Anti-SLAPP legislation protects public expression. It is an attempt to counter the litigation that has a chilling effect on free speech. It creates a separate dismissal action for cases that are intended to chill a person's exercise of freedom of speech or government petitioning through our civil justice system. It allows a person who thinks he or she should not be a party to be removed from the case.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Keathley; Missouri Press Association; Missouri Broadcasters Association; Arnie Dienoff; and Institute for Free Speech.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.