



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 3443		DATE: 4/1/2026	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ERIC D. JENNINGS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-526-4726	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF MISSOURI		TITLE: GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COUNSEL	
ADDRESS: 207 WEST HIGH STREET			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 4/1/2026 12:00 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 3443		DATE: 4/1/2026	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 4/1/2026 7:47 AM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

HB 3443 establishes a system of increasing court costs, including automatic annual adjustments tied to the Consumer Price Index, creating a revenue-generating structure that raises substantial constitutional concerns regarding access to the courts, due process, and improper financial conditioning of judicial participation.

Although framed as an administrative funding mechanism, the bill functionally imposes a pay-to-access framework on the judicial system. By increasing baseline fees and mandating indefinite, automatic escalation without future legislative approval, the proposal creates a continuously expanding financial barrier to court access.

This structure raises immediate concerns under the constitutional right of access to the courts, as recognized under both state and federal law. When filing or defending a legal action becomes contingent on the ability to absorb escalating and externally indexed costs, the system risks excluding individuals based on financial capacity rather than the merits of their claims.

The automatic indexing mechanism further introduces improper delegation concerns, as future increases in court costs are effectively outsourced to an external economic metric (CPI), rather than subject to direct legislative action, oversight, or public accountability. This creates a self-executing revenue system with no built-in limiting principle.

HB 3443 also raises serious due process concerns, as litigants are subjected to a cost structure that is not fixed, predictable, or subject to individualized consideration. The compounding nature of inflation-based increases—combined with already low collection rates—demonstrates that the system is not calibrated to ability to pay, but rather to revenue generation.

The fiscal structure underlying the bill further suggests the conversion of the judiciary into a revenue-dependent system, where court operations are increasingly funded through user fees imposed on litigants. Courts are a core constitutional function, not a service to be monetized through escalating access charges.

When revenue generation becomes a driving factor, it risks undermining public confidence in judicial neutrality and fairness.

Additionally, the uniform imposition of increased and continuously rising fees across civil and criminal matters raises equal protection concerns, as the burden will fall disproportionately on lower-income

individuals, effectively creating a two-tiered system of justice based on financial means.

The cumulative effect of these provisions—automatic escalation, lack of legislative control, revenue-driven structure, and disproportionate impact—creates a framework that is vulnerable to constitutional challenge on multiple grounds.

Bottom line:

HB 3443 constructs a self-escalating, revenue-driven court cost system that conditions access to the judiciary on financial capacity and removes meaningful legislative oversight over future increases.

The General Assembly is hereby placed on notice that enactment of this provision may give rise to constitutional challenges, including but not limited to violations of access to the courts, due process, equal protection, and improper delegation of legislative authority.