



Mississippi Association for Justice

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Senate Bill 2901 and House Bill 337 Creates Unreasonably Unsafe Communities

Every day, we Mississippians go about our daily lives and conduct our business on other people's property. We shop for food at grocery stores, get gas at convenience stores, and get treatment at medical clinics and hospitals. We take our families to shopping malls, movie theaters, amusement parks, and to eat at restaurants. These are places where we expect to be safe. These are places where we deserve to be safe.

Under current Mississippi law, business owners must keep their property reasonably safe for their customers. This means they must guard against known dangers, such as spills on the floor or holes in the ground or violent people that they know have injured or killed people before. They must also warn about hidden dangers that they know about but that customers may not see.

Big corporations, insurance companies, and their lawyers are working to change those laws that keep us safe in these public places and our communities. With Senate Bill 2901 and House Bill 337—known as the Landowner Protection Act—these corporations, insurance companies, and lawyers are trying to get the Mississippi Legislature to give them a free pass from having to keep their property safe for customers. These bills would result in landowners being free from any responsibility if their customers are injured or killed due to conditions on their property that they knew about. These bills protect landowners by letting them have no responsibility at all to protect their customers. These bills do not protect Mississippians or the customers who spend their hard-earned money with these businesses. These bills will make us less safe.

SB 2901 and HB 337 will create zero accountability zones in public places. The bills provide that landowners cannot be held responsible for injuries and deaths on their property unless they intended the harm to happen. Landowners will no longer be held responsible if they ignore known dangers on their property. This will result in them not taking simple safety measures such as adequate lighting, surveillance cameras, running off people they know to be violent, or other basic security that customers have come to expect. These bills essentially say: "No lights, no safety cameras, no security: no problem."

Since there will be no accountability if these bills pass, landowners will have no incentive to do anything to protect their customers. Current law provides that incentive by requiring only that they keep their property reasonably safe. With no such incentives, these properties will become unreasonably unsafe. Now is not the time for this, when human trafficking and domestic violence are on the rise.

If these bills become law, Mississippi will be less safe. There will be more crime. The burden for responding to crimes that are easily preventable with minimal effort will be shifted to already strained local law enforcement. This is why local sheriffs like Randall Tucker (Madison County) and Victor Mason (Hinds County) oppose these bills. Our court systems—already overworked and underfunded—will become more crowded. So will our local jails and prisons. Where will the money come from to address these results? Local taxpayers. You and your family, neighbors, and community members. The human toll of preventable injuries and deaths will be passed on to victims and the public through Medicaid and Medicare.

All of this can be prevented if our Senators and Representatives will reject this effort by big businesses, insurance companies, and their lawyers to get a free pass. In Mississippi, we take care of one another. This includes making sure our business owners provide minimal safety protections to customers against known dangers. You have a right to expect that you will be safe in your community where you shop, eat, receive medical care, and play with your children.

It is said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. These bills remove the ounce of prevention from business and insurance companies and put all the pounds of cure on victims and taxpayers. That is not fair or right.

Contact your local Senator and Representative and ask them to vote against SB 2901 and HB 337. Contact Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves and Speaker of the House Philip Gunn to voice your opposition. Contact your police chief, sheriff, mayor, aldermen, supervisors, and other local officials and share your concerns. Tell them to call their Senators and Representatives too. The safety of your community is at stake.

Graham P. Carner

President, Mississippi Association for Justice

The Mississippi Association for Justice is the foremost legal organization in the state focusing on protecting the legal rights of everyday Mississippians in the civil justice system. MAJ is committed to

protecting the health and safety of Mississippi families, to enhancing consumer protections, and to preserving each and every citizen's right to trial by jury and access to the courts.

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