



The Missouri Non-Partisan Court Plan

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By: David Stokes

Missouri's non-partisan court plan, which may not be as non-partisan as we would all like, is under attack. In the [KC Star today](#), one lawyer does a so-so job of defending the plan. I am opposed to the dramatic changes proposed by the legislature and discussed in the op-ed, but I agree there are problems with the system. I have two (maybe three), simple suggestions for keeping the non-partisan court plan that will, in my opinion, address the legitimate concerns of the legislators seeking to change it.

For one, make the terms of the governor's appointments to all the judicial commissions run concurrent with the governor's term of office. Staggered, six-year terms make no sense, and just serve to allow defeated parties to keep putting their supporters up for judgeships. Second, add one more gubernatorial appointment to each commission so that the number of lawyers either serving automatically or elected by the bar association is equal to the number of governor's appointees. Finally, allow one of the governor's appointees to be an attorney himself. At present, they cannot be attorneys and it is easy for them, as non-

lawyers, to be intimidated or dominated by the majority lawyers on the commission. For the record, that last line is a supposition - I have no evidence that the non-lawyers have been intimidated by not being as knowledgeable about the issues or applicatns as the lawyers, but I don't see it as far-fetched for it to happen.

There it is. Basic changes to improve an already good plan. Now let's go get some ice cream [frozen custard](#) .

About the Author



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David Stokes was a policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute from 2007 to 2014 and was director of development from 2014 to 2016.

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