

SB0227S02 compared with SB0227

~~{Omitted text}~~ shows text that was in SB0227 but was omitted in SB0227S02

inserted text shows text that was not in SB0227 but was inserted into SB0227S02

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1

Punitive Damages Amendments
2026 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Ronald M. Winterton
House Sponsor:



2

3 **LONG TITLE**

4 **General Description:**

5 This bill enacts provisions relating to ~~{limitations on liability for}~~ punitive damages.

6 **Highlighted Provisions:**

7 This bill:

- 8 ▶ ~~{defines "motor vehicle";}~~
- 9 ▶ provides ~~{a limit on an award of punitive damages resulting from a personal injury claim}~~ that ~~{involves a motor vehicle; and provides a limit}~~ an insurer may not rely on the ~~{attorney fees related}~~ existence, likelihood, possibility, or exposure to ~~{an award of}~~ punitive damages~~{-}~~ when taking actions under Title 31A, Insurance Code;
- 10 ▶ provides the circumstances in which a court may award punitive damages against an employer or principal for the conduct of the employer's or principal's employee or agent; and
- 13 ▶ makes technical changes.

14 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

15 None

16 **Other Special Clauses:**

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17 None

18 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

19 AMENDS:

20 **31A-20-101 , as last amended by Laws of Utah 1986, Chapter 204**

21 ENACTS:

22 **78B-8-204** , Utah Code Annotated 1953

23

24 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

25 **Section 1. Section 31A-20-101 is amended to read:**

26 **31A-20-101. Underwriting limitations.**

27 (1) No insurer may insure or attempt to insure against:

28 [(1)] (a) a wager or gaming risk;

29 [(2)] (b) loss of an election;

30 [(3)] (c) the penal consequences of a crime; or

31 [(4)] (d) punitive damages.

32 (2) An insurer may not consider, use, or rely upon the existence, likelihood, possibility, or exposure to punitive damages when engaging in any of the following under this title:

34 (a) underwriting;

35 (b) rating;

36 (c) risk classification; or

37 (d) determining premiums or other charges for a policy.

38 Section 2. Section 2 is enacted to read:

39 **78B-8-204. {~~Limitations on award of punitive~~ } Punitive damages {~~for a personal injury claim involving a motor vehicle~~ } in an employment or agency relationship.**

24 {~~(1) {As used in this section, "motor vehicle" means the same as that term is defined in Section 41-1a-102.}~~}

40 **(1) In an action where a plaintiff seeks punitive damages against an employer or principal based on the conduct of an employee or agent:**

42 **(a) the employer or principal may not be held vicariously liable for punitive damages based solely on the agency or employment relationship; and**

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(b) except as provided in Subsection (2), a court may not award the plaintiff punitive damages against the employer or principal.

46 (2) A court may award punitive damages against an employer or principal for the conduct of an employee or agent if the plaintiff demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that, in addition to the agent's or employee's conduct, the employer's or principal's conduct was willful, malicious, or in reckless disregard to the rights or safety of others.

26 (2){(3)} ~~{If the basis}~~ Subsections (1) and (2) apply to any claim for an award of punitive damages, including a claim for punitive damages {under Section 78B-8-201 is based on} arising out of the tortfeasor's operation of a motor vehicle {and the cause of action arises out of a personal injury claim, an award of punitive damages may not exceed an amount equal to the greater of:} or motorboat while voluntarily intoxicated or under the influence of any drug or combination of alcohol and drugs as prohibited by Section 41-6a-502.

29 ~~{(a) {the sum of:}}~~

30 ~~{(i) {two times the amount of economic damages; and}}~~

31 ~~{(ii) {an amount equal to any noneconomic damages not exceeding \$750,000; or}}~~

32 ~~{(b) {\$200,000.}}~~

33 ~~{(3) {If a court awards a person punitive damages in accordance with this section, attorney fees for the person may not exceed 25% of the amount of the total award of punitive damages.}}~~

54 Section 3. **Effective date.**

Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.

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