**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 38-77-720(a) AND (b) OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE NUMBER, QUALIFICATIONS, AND COMPENSATION OF ARBITRATORS IN PROPERTY DAMAGE LIABILITY CLAIMS ARISING OUT OF MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISIONS OR ACCIDENTS, TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF REQUIRED ARBITRATORS FROM THREE TO ONE, AND TO PROVIDE THAT ARBITRATORS SHALL RECEIVE THE SAME FEE AS COURT-APPOINTED MEDIATORS AND ARBITRATORS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 38-77-720(a) and (b) is amended to read:

“Section 38-77-720. (a) The order of reference shall ~~establish a panel of arbitrators each of whom~~ select an arbitrator to hear and determine the issues in the case. The arbitrator must be a member of the bar. Arbitrators ~~and the members~~ must be selected for service in particular cases on some fair rotation basis. ~~Three arbitrators shall hear and determine each case and the decision of two of the three arbitrators shall determine the issue. However, the parties to the dispute may, by agreement, provide for determination of the disputed claim by one arbitrator.~~

(b) Each arbitrator assigned to determine the claim may be compensated~~, not to exceed thirty‑five dollars~~ for his services and time, payable out of the funds of the court and which may not be taxable as costs to either party. Compensation shall be equal to compensation for court-appointed neutrals.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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