

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 3016

**FISCAL
NOTE**

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HARSHBARGER

[Introduced March 14, 2017; Referred
to the Committee on the Judiciary then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §21A-6-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to
 2 amend said code by adding thereto a new section, designated §21A-6-18, all relating to
 3 domestic violence victims' eligibility for unemployment compensation benefits; removing
 4 disqualification for certain victims of domestic violence, sexual offenses or stalking;
 5 providing employer is not chargeable for benefits under certain circumstances, and
 6 requiring training of WorkForce West Virginia employees in the nature and dynamics of
 7 domestic violence to aid employees who interact with claimants.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That §21A-6-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended and
 2 reenacted; and that said code be amended by adding thereto a new section, designated §21A-6-
 3 18, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 6. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY; BENEFITS.

§21A-6-3. Disqualification for benefits.

1 Upon the determination of the facts by the commissioner, an individual is disqualified for
 2 benefits:

3 (1) For the week in which he or she left his or her most recent work voluntarily without
 4 good cause involving fault on the part of the employer and until the individual returns to covered
 5 employment and has been employed in covered employment at least thirty working days.

6 For the purpose of this subdivision, an individual has not left his or her most recent work
 7 voluntarily without good cause involving fault on the part of the employer, if the individual leaves
 8 his or her most recent work with an employer and if he or she in fact, within a fourteen-day
 9 calendar period, does return to employment with the last preceding employer with whom he or
 10 she was previously employed within the past year prior to his or her return to workday, and which
 11 last preceding employer, after having previously employed the individual for thirty working days
 12 or more, laid off the individual because of lack of work, which layoff occasioned the payment of
 13 benefits under this chapter or could have occasioned the payment of benefits under this chapter

14 had the individual applied for benefits. It is the intent of this paragraph to cause no disqualification
15 for benefits for an individual who complies with the foregoing set of requirements and conditions.
16 Further, for the purpose of this subdivision, an individual has not left his or her most recent work
17 voluntarily without good cause involving fault on the part of the employer, if the individual was
18 compelled to leave his or her work: ~~for his or her own~~

19 (A) For health-related reasons and notifies the employer prior to leaving the job or within
20 two business days after leaving the job or as soon as practicable and presents written certification
21 from a licensed physician within thirty days of leaving the job that his or her work aggravated,
22 worsened or will worsen the individual's health problem; or

23 (B) Due to circumstances directly resulting from:

24 (I) Domestic violence, as defined in section two hundred two, article twenty-seven, chapter
25 forty-eight of this code;

26 (II) A sexual offense in article eight-b, chapter sixty-one of this code; or

27 (III) Stalking as provided in section nine-a, article two, chapter sixty-one of this code by a
28 family or household member as defined in section two hundred four, article twenty-seven, chapter
29 forty-eight of this code; and

30 (IV) The benefits payable under this paragraph (B) shall be paid from the fund provided
31 under the provisions of article eight of this chapter and are not chargeable to the employer.

32 (2) For the week in which he or she was discharged from his or her most recent work for
33 misconduct and the six weeks immediately following that week; or for the week in which he or she
34 was discharged from his or her last thirty-day employing unit for misconduct and the six weeks
35 immediately following that week. The disqualification carries a reduction in the maximum benefit
36 amount equal to six times the individual's weekly benefit. However, if the claimant returns to work
37 in covered employment for thirty days during his or her benefit year, whether or not the days are
38 consecutive, the maximum benefit amount is increased by the amount of the decrease imposed
39 under the disqualification; except that:

40 If he or she were discharged from his or her most recent work for one of the following
41 reasons, or if he or she were discharged from his or her last thirty days employing unit for one of
42 the following reasons: Gross misconduct consisting of willful destruction of his or her employer's
43 property; assault upon the person of his or her employer or any employee of his or her employer;
44 if the assault is committed at the individual's place of employment or in the course of employment;
45 reporting to work in an intoxicated condition, or being intoxicated while at work; reporting to work
46 under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in chapter sixty-a of this code without
47 a valid prescription, or being under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in ~~said~~
48 chapter sixty-a without a valid prescription, while at work; adulterating or otherwise manipulating
49 a sample or specimen in order to thwart a drug or alcohol test lawfully required of an employee;
50 refusal to submit to random testing for alcohol or illegal controlled substances for employees in
51 safety sensitive positions as defined in section two, article one-d, chapter twenty-one of this code;
52 arson, theft, larceny, fraud or embezzlement in connection with his or her work; or any other gross
53 misconduct, he or she is disqualified for benefits until he or she has thereafter worked for at least
54 thirty days in covered employment: *Provided*, That for the purpose of this subdivision, the words
55 "any other gross misconduct" includes, but is not limited to, any act or acts of misconduct where
56 the individual has received prior written warning that termination of employment may result from
57 the act or acts: *Provided, however, That "misconduct" does not include any discharge due to*
58 *circumstances directly resulting from domestic violence, as defined in section two hundred two,*
59 *article twenty-seven, chapter forty-eight of this code; a sexual offense in article eight-b, chapter*
60 *sixty-one of this code; or stalking as defined by section nine-a, article two, chapter sixty-one of*
61 *this code by a family or household member as defined in section two hundred four, article twenty-*
62 *seven, chapter forty-eight of this code.*

63 (3) For the week in which he or she failed without good cause to apply for available,
64 suitable work, accept suitable work when offered, or return to his or her customary self-
65 employment when directed to do so by the commissioner, and for the four weeks which

66 immediately follow for such additional period as any offer of suitable work shall continue open for
67 his or her acceptance. The disqualification carries a reduction in the maximum benefit amount
68 equal to four times the individual's weekly benefit amount.

69 (4) For a week in which his or her total or partial unemployment is due to a stoppage of
70 work which exists because of a labor dispute at the factory, establishment or other premises at
71 which he or she was last employed, unless the commissioner is satisfied that he or she: ~~(1)~~ (A)
72 Was not participating, financing or directly interested in the dispute; and ~~(2)~~ (B) did not belong to
73 a grade or class of workers who were participating, financing or directly interested in the labor
74 dispute which resulted in the stoppage of work. No disqualification under this subdivision is
75 imposed if the employees are required to accept wages, hours or conditions of employment
76 substantially less favorable than those prevailing for similar work in the locality, or if employees
77 are denied the right of collective bargaining under generally prevailing conditions, or if an
78 employer shuts down his or her plant or operation or dismisses his or her employees in order to
79 force wage reduction, changes in hours or working conditions. For the purpose of this subdivision
80 if any stoppage of work continues longer than four weeks after the termination of the labor dispute
81 which caused stoppage of work, there is a rebuttable presumption that part of the stoppage of
82 work which exists after a period of four weeks after the termination of the labor dispute did not
83 exist because of the labor dispute; and in that event the burden is upon the employer or other
84 interested party to show otherwise.

85 (5) For a week with respect to which he or she is receiving or has received:

86 ~~(a)~~ (A) Wages in lieu of notice;

87 ~~(b)~~ (B) Compensation for temporary total disability under the workers' compensation law
88 of any state or under a similar law of the United States; or

89 ~~(c)~~ (C) Unemployment compensation benefits under the laws of the United States or any
90 other state.

91 (6) For the week in which an individual has voluntarily quit employment to marry or to

92 perform any marital, parental or family duty, or to attend to his or her personal business or affairs
93 and until the individual returns to covered employment and has been employed in covered
94 employment at least thirty working days: *Provided*, That an individual who has voluntarily quit
95 employment to accompany a spouse serving in active military service who has been reassigned
96 from one military assignment to another is not disqualified for benefits pursuant to this subdivision:
97 *Provided, however*, That the account of the employer of an individual who leaves the employment
98 to accompany a spouse reassigned from one military assignment to another may not be charged.

99 (7) Benefits may not be paid to any individual on the basis of any services, substantially
100 all of which consist of participating in sports or athletic events or training or preparing to ~~se~~
101 participate, for any week which commences during the period between two successive sport
102 seasons (or similar periods) if the individual performed the services in the first of the seasons (or
103 similar periods) and there is a reasonable assurance that the individual will perform the services
104 in the later of the seasons (or similar periods).

105 (8) ~~(a)~~ (A) Benefits may not be paid on the basis of services performed by an alien unless
106 the alien is an individual who was lawfully admitted for permanent residence at the time the
107 services were performed, was lawfully present for purposes of performing the services or was
108 permanently residing in the United States under color of law at the time the services were
109 performed (including an alien who is lawfully present in the United States as a result of the
110 application of the provisions of Section 203(a)(7) or Section 212(d)(5) of the Immigration and
111 Nationality Act): *Provided*, That any modifications to the provisions of Section 3304(a)(14) of the
112 federal Unemployment Tax Act as provided by Public Law 94-566 which specify other conditions
113 or other effective date than stated in this subdivision for the denial of benefits based on services
114 performed by aliens and which modifications are required to be implemented under state law as
115 a condition for full tax credit against the tax imposed by the federal Unemployment Tax Act are
116 applicable under the provisions of this section.

117 ~~(b)~~ (B) Any data or information required of individuals applying for benefits to determine

118 whether benefits are not payable to them because of their alien status shall be uniformly required
119 from all applicants for benefits.

120 ~~(e)~~ (C) In the case of an individual whose application for benefits would otherwise be
121 approved, no determination that benefits to the individual are not payable because of his or her
122 alien status may be made except upon a preponderance of the evidence.

123 (9) For each week in which an individual is unemployed because, having voluntarily left
124 employment to attend a school, college, university or other educational institution, he or she is
125 attending that school, college, university or other educational institution, or is awaiting entrance
126 thereto or is awaiting the starting of a new term or session thereof, and until the individual returns
127 to covered employment.

128 (10) For each week in which he or she is unemployed because of his or her request, or
129 that of his or her duly authorized agent, for a vacation period at a specified time that would leave
130 the employer no other alternative but to suspend operations.

131 (11) In the case of an individual who accepts an early retirement incentive package, unless
132 he or she: ~~(i)~~ (A) Establishes a well-grounded fear of imminent layoff supported by definitive
133 objective facts involving fault on the part of the employer; and ~~(ii)~~ (B) establishes that he or she
134 would suffer a substantial loss by not accepting the early retirement incentive package.

135 (12) For each week with respect to which he or she is receiving or has received benefits
136 under Title II of the Social Security Act or similar payments under any Act of Congress, or
137 remuneration in the form of an annuity, pension or other retirement pay from a base period
138 employer or chargeable employer or from any trust or fund contributed to by a base period
139 employer or chargeable employer or any combination of the above, the weekly benefit amount
140 payable to the individual for that week shall be reduced (but not below zero) by the prorated
141 weekly amount of those benefits, payments or remuneration: *Provided*, That if the amount of
142 benefits is not a multiple of \$1, it shall be computed to the next lowest multiple of \$1: *Provided*,
143 *however*, That there is no disqualification if in the individual's base period there are no wages

144 which were paid by the base period employer or chargeable employer paying the remuneration,
 145 or by a fund into which the employer has paid during the base period: *Provided further*, That
 146 notwithstanding any other provision of this subdivision to the contrary, the weekly benefit amount
 147 payable to the individual for that week may not be reduced by any retirement benefits he or she
 148 is receiving or has received under Title II of the Social Security Act or similar payments under any
 149 Act of Congress. A claimant may be required to certify as to whether or not he or she is receiving
 150 or has been receiving remuneration in the form of an annuity, pension or other retirement pay
 151 from a base period employer or chargeable employer or from a trust fund contributed to by a base
 152 period employer or chargeable employer.

153 (13) For each week in which and for fifty-two weeks thereafter, beginning with the date of
 154 the decision, if the commissioner finds the individual who within twenty-four calendar months
 155 immediately preceding the decision, has made a false statement or representation knowing it to
 156 be false or knowingly fails to disclose a material fact, to obtain or increase any benefit or payment
 157 under this article: *Provided*, That disqualification under this subdivision does not preclude
 158 prosecution under section seven, article ten of this chapter.

§21A-6-18. Administration of domestic violence claims.

1 The Executive Director of WorkForce West Virginia shall:

2 (1) Promulgate procedural rules providing for the confidentiality of information, including
 3 without limitation, addresses and contact information obtained in evaluating claims for domestic
 4 violence, sexual offenses and stalking by family or household members; and

5 (2) Establish and implement a training curriculum addressing the nature and dynamics of
 6 domestic violence to aid employees who interact with claimants:

7 (A) In determining whether a claimant's separation stems from domestic violence, a sexual
 8 offense or stalking by family or household members; and

9 (B) In reliably screening, identifying and adjudicating those claims.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to prevent an individual from being disqualified from receiving unemployment compensation benefits when their separation from employment is due to domestic violence, sexual offenses or stalking by family or household members. The bill provides that the employer is not chargeable for benefits paid when the separation from work is for those reasons.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.