

Employment News

These recent changes in employment law may affect your business in 2012:

Minimum Wage Increase. Oregon minimum wage increases from \$8.50 to \$8.80 in January, 2012. Remember, Oregon employers are required to post the minimum wage rate, as well as other employment information. Free posters are available at the BOLI website at www.Oregon.gov/BOLI.

Jury Service Protections. Oregon law now explicitly prohibits employers from retaliating, intimidating, or discriminating against an employee because the employee has been called to serve on a jury. An employee's benefits cannot be reduced if they miss work time because of jury service. For example, employees must remain eligible for insurance and paid time off benefits even if their hours drop below minimum weekly or monthly eligibility thresholds due to their jury service. In addition, employers may permit, but cannot require, employees to use accrued paid time off or vacation during jury service.

Victim Protection. The laws requiring employers to offer reasonable unpaid leave and safety accommodations to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking have been expanded. Now, employers must also provide these protections to victims of criminal harassment and workplace sexual harassment upon request.

Arbitration Agreements. Agreements requiring employees to pursue legal claims through arbitration rather than in court must satisfy specific rules and contain mandated language, or they will not be enforced. Only arbitration agreements entered into upon initial employment or a bona fide job advancement (promotion) are enforceable. As of January 1, 2012, when an arbitration agreement is entered into on initial employment, the employee must receive a copy of the arbitration agreement for review at least 72 hours prior to beginning employment. Be sure your agreements are reviewed by legal counsel before you ask employees to sign.

Keep this handout with your employee handbook and other employment documents, and make sure managers are aware of these new rules. For more information regarding these or other employment law issues, please contact Kevin Burgess or Jaclyn Semple at (541) 484-2277 in Eugene, (541) 673-5528 in Roseburg, or (541) 923-8767 in Redmond.

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