

Protecting employers' right to decide competitive benefits

By Doug Loon

04/15/21

As early as this week, the Minnesota Senate and House may vote on proposals such as mandating up to 24 weeks of paid leave – that's 44 percent of work days in a year. This mandate applies to all private-sector employers, regardless of size. If enacted, Minnesota would be the only state in the nation with such expansive and expensive mandates.

Businesses and local chambers from around the state are contacting their legislators to urge them to oppose labor mandates on private-sector employers. The House labor and workforce omnibus bill is full of provisions that hurt employers in a time of economic recovery. The Senate could vote on these proposals as amendments to the Senate Jobs bill.

House provisions include:

- Up to 24 weeks of a paid family and medical leave mandate paid for through a new 0.6% payroll tax on every employer to create a broad new state-run insurance program that will collectively cost the Minnesota business community \$2.2 billion over the next three years.
- Up to 80 hours of a statewide paid sick and safe time mandate that employers must offer fully paid time off in a specific format, for an expanded set of familial persons, for an expanded list of qualifying events. This proposal is different than paid sick and safe time ordinances adopted in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, and since these local ordinances are not preempted, it maintains a patchwork of sick and safe time mandates within Minnesota.
- Up to 160 hours of emergency paid sick leave for certain “essential workers” - retroactive to March 13, 2020 and through September 31, 2021.
- Removal of employer flexibilities and small business exemptions for pregnancy accommodations and employee lactation breaks.
- Emergency rehire and retention protections on certain employers by requiring them to offer employees who were laid-off due to the pandemic information about available job positions for which they qualify and to rehire from employees based on a preference system of qualifications and seniority.

Minnesota's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic must be the top priority for the 2021 legislative session. Reopening the economy and managing the continued economic fallout due to the pandemic is one of the top concerns of Minnesota businesses. A “do no harm” approach is critically important so that additional cost burdens and mandates are not placed on employers who are doing their best to keep their doors open and people employed.

If you feel as strongly about allowing businesses to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic as we do, please join the Minnesota Chamber and your local chamber – reach out to legislators and urge them to vote no on workplace mandate proposals that will hurt employers and employees during a time of economic recovery.