

HB 726 -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

SPONSOR: Knight

This bill provides that vacation pay, severance pay, termination pay, and holiday pay are considered wages for the week they are payable. The bill explains the total amount of wages for the purposes of determining unemployment benefits eligibility.

The bill changes the average unemployment rate requirement in order for an insured worker to receive unemployment compensation benefits to:

- (1) Twenty weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 9%;
- (2) Nineteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 8.5% but no higher than 9%;
- (3) Eighteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 8% but no higher than 8.5%;
- (4) Seventeen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 7.5% but no higher than 8%;
- (5) Sixteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 7% but no higher than 7.5%;
- (6) Fifteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 6.5% but no higher than 7%;
- (7) Fourteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 6% but no higher than 6.5%;
- (8) Thirteen weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 5.5% but no higher than 6%; and
- (9) Twelve weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is at or below 5.5%;
- (10) Eleven weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 4.5% but no higher than 5%;
- (11) Ten weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 4% but no higher than 4.5%;
- (12) Nine weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is higher than 3.5% but no higher than 4%; and

(13) Eight weeks if the Missouri unemployment rate is at or below 3.5%.

For the purposes of this schedule, "Missouri unemployment rate" means the statewide unemployment rate as published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, on the date that the worker applies for such benefits (Section 288.036, 288.060, RSMo).

Subsection 5 of Section 288.060 has a delayed effective date of January 1, 2024.

This bill establishes the "Employment Security Program Integrity Act of 2023".

The Division of Employment Security within the Department of Labor is authorized to engage with and utilize a national data check system to ensure that unemployment compensation benefits are received by eligible participants.

The bill requires the Division to perform checks on a weekly basis with the Department of Corrections, state death records and National Directory of New Hires as specified in the bill. The bill also sets out the administrative policies to be adopted by the Division to recover fraudulent or improper unemployment compensation benefit overpayments. The Division is authorized to enter into memorandum of understanding with any governmental entity of the state in order to share and receive necessary information (Section 288.104).

Section 288.104 has an effective date of January 1, 2024.

This bill is similar to SCS HB 1860 (2022).