

## HB 1709 -- WORKERS' COMPENSATION

SPONSOR: Veit

The bill permits the Labor and Industrial Relations Commission to change the name, information, or fee arrangement of the attorney or law firm representing a claimant upon the filing of a written agreement, signed by both the claimant and the attorney, with the Commission. Additionally, a lifetime payment for permanent total disability will be suspended during the time in which an employee is restored to his or her regular work or its equivalent through the use of glasses, prosthetic appliances, or physical rehabilitation.

Currently, a retention vote is required to be taken by the Administrative Law Judge Review Committee with respect to each Workers' Compensation Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). Additionally, the Committee is required to conduct performance audits periodically and make recommendations of confidence or no confidence with respect to each ALJ. This bill repeals these requirements and instead creates new provisions for filing complaints against and removing ALJs.

Prior to filing a complaint, the Director must notify the ALJ in writing of the reasons for the complaint. Special provisions are included if the reason for the complaint is willful neglect of duty or incompetency.

Upon a finding by the Administrative Hearing Commission (AHC) that the grounds for disciplinary action are met, the Director can, singly or in combination, issue the disciplinary actions against the ALJ, as specified in the bill, including removal or suspension from office. If there are no grounds for disciplinary action, the ALJ will immediately resume duties and will receive any attorneys' fees due under current law.

The bill repeals a requirement that the committee members not have any direct or indirect employment or financial connection with a workers' compensation insurance company, claims adjustment company, health care provider nor be a practicing Workers' Compensation attorney. The bill additionally repeals a requirement that all members of the Committee have a working knowledge of Workers' Compensation.

The bill provides that the compensation for ALJs and Chief ALJs will be determined solely by the rate outlined in law and will

not increase when pay raises for executive employees are appropriated.

The bill furthermore repeals reference to the position of Chief Legal Counsel.

The bill repeals a prohibition on the payment of any retirement benefits under Workers' Compensation law to any Administrative Law Judge who has been removed from office by impeachment or for misconduct, or to any person who has been disbarred from the practice of law, or to the beneficiary of any such persons.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 123(2025) and SCS HCS HB 2064 (2024).