

SESSION OF 2013

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 187

As Amended by Senate Committee on
Commerce

Brief*

SB 187, as amended, would replace the Workers Compensation Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Nominating and Review Committee and the Workers Compensation Board Nominating Committee with a new entity that would be named the Workers Compensation and Employment Security Boards Nominating Committee. The new Committee would make nominations pertaining to positions in the Workers Compensation Division, the Workers Compensation Review Board, and the Employment Security (Unemployment Insurance or UI) Board of Review. Under current law, the Division and the two boards are organized within the Department of Labor.

The new Nominating Committee would have seven members. The following state official and groups would nominate members to serve:

- The Secretary of the Department of Labor (Secretary);
- The Kansas Chamber of Commerce;
- The National Federation of Independent Businesses;
- The Kansas AFL-CIO;

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

- The Kansas State Council of the Society for Human Resource Management;
- The Kansas Self-Insurers Association; and
- The Secretary would nominate one member from either an employee organization, as defined by KSA 75-4322, or a professional employees' organization, as defined by KSA 72-5413.

The Governor would appoint each member to a four-year term. No member would serve longer than two consecutive terms. If the Governor chose not to appoint a person, the same nominating source would replace the selection by the same process. If a vacancy were to occur on the new Nominating Committee, the respective nominating source would have 30 days to nominate another person.

The new Nominating Committee would meet as needed. A two-thirds majority of the new Nominating Committee would be required to approve an action.

Workers Compensation Administrative Law Judges

The bill would increase the annual salary for ALJ's from 75 percent to 85 percent of the annual salary paid to a district judge.

If there was a vacant ALJ position, the new Nominating Committee would nominate a person from a list of qualified applicants provided by the Director of the Workers Compensation Division. The Secretary would have the discretion to appoint or reject a nomination. In the latter case, the new Nominating Committee would nominate another person for the vacancy.

The reappointment process for an ALJ who has served a four year term would be revised by the bill. An incumbent ALJ would submit an application to the Director of Workers

Compensation. The application would be forwarded to the Secretary unless the new Nominating Committee decided, by a two-thirds majority vote, to not forward the application. Under current law, an incumbent ALJ wishing to be reappointed is considered directly by the ALJ Nominating and Review Committee.

The ALJ Nominating and Review Committee is comprised of two members currently. The Secretary is required to appoint one person nominated by the Kansas AFL-CIO and the other nominated by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. Using a list of qualified applicants provided by the Director of Workers Compensation, the Nominating and Review Committee makes a unanimous nomination to the Secretary. The Secretary has the discretion to accept or reject the applicant.

Worker Compensation Appeals Board

Under current law, the Workers Compensation Board reviews the decisions, findings, orders, and awards made by the ALJs. The five members of the Workers Compensation Board are required by statute to have a minimum of seven years experience practicing law in Kansas. The bill would rename the Board, calling it the Worker Compensation Appeals Board.

The current Nominating Committee for the Workers Compensation Board is comprised of two members. The Secretary of Labor is required to appoint one person nominated by the Kansas AFL-CIO and the other nominated by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce.

UI Board of Review

With regard to a vacancy on the UI Board of Review, the new Nominating Committee would submit a nominees for the Governor's consideration. The Governor could choose not to

appoint any of the nominees. In which case, the new Nominating Committee would nominate another person for the vacancy. Appointees would continue to require confirmation by the Senate. Board members would be limited to serving two consecutive terms.

Under current law, the UI Board of Review hears appeals arising from disputed UI claims. The Board is comprised of three members appointed to four year terms. The Kansas AFL-CIO and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce each nominate three persons to the Governor. The Governor then appoints one from each list. After Senate confirmation, the two Board members agree upon the selection of the third member, representing the general public

Background

The Kansas Self-Insurers Association, the Kansas State Council Society for Human Resource Management, the Kansas Chamber, the National Federation of Independent Business, and the Department of Labor provided proponent testimony at the Senate Committee hearing. According to their testimony, the bill would provide for more representation for employers and employees. Proponents contend the current selection processes favor nominees who are the least objectionable and not necessarily the most qualified.

The Kansas Association for Justice and the Kansas AFL-CIO spoke in opposition to the bill. Opponents noted that prior to 1993, when the current selection process was established, ALJ's were political appointments. Courts of law did not defer to the ALJ decisions, and there was unnecessary litigation. Opponents contend the current system is apolitical.

In addition to technical amendments, the Senate Committee on Commerce amended the bill by deleting the proposed changes to the size of the Workers Compensation Appeals Board's hearing panels, from three members to two members.

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget, the bill, as introduced, would have no fiscal impact on the Department of Labor.