

44-719. Penalties for violation of act; repayment of benefits ineligibly received, interest thereon; criminal prosecution. (a) Any person who makes a false statement or representation knowing it to be false or knowingly fails to disclose a material fact, to obtain or increase any benefit or other payment under this act, either for such person or for any other person, shall be guilty of theft and shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 21-5801, and amendments thereto.

(b) Any employing unit or any officer or agent for any employing unit or any other person who makes a false statement or representation knowing it to be false, or who knowingly fails to disclose a material fact, to prevent or reduce the payment of benefits to any individual entitled thereto, or to avoid becoming or remaining subject hereto or to avoid or reduce any contribution or other payment required from an employing unit under this act, or who willfully fails or refuses to make any such contributions or other payment or to furnish any reports required hereunder or to produce or permit the inspection or copying of records as required hereunder, shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$20 nor more than \$200, or by imprisonment for not longer than 60 days, or both such fine and imprisonment. Each such false statement or representation or failure to disclose a material fact and each day of such failure or refusal shall constitute a separate offense.

(c) Any person who willfully violates any provision of this act or any rule and regulation adopted by the secretary hereunder, the violation of which is made unlawful or the observance of which is required under the terms of this act, and for which a penalty is neither prescribed herein or provided by any other applicable statute, shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$20 nor more than \$200, or by imprisonment for not longer than 60 days, or by both such fine and imprisonment, and each day such violation continues shall be deemed to be a separate offense.

(d) (1) Any person who has received any amount of money as benefits under this act while any conditions for the receipt of benefits imposed by this act were not fulfilled in such person's case, or while such person was disqualified from receiving benefits, shall in the discretion of the secretary, either be liable to have such amount of money deducted from any future benefits payable to such person under this act or shall be liable to repay to the secretary for the employment security fund an amount of money equal to the amount so received by such person. After a period of five years, the secretary may waive the collection of any such amount of money when the secretary has determined that the payment of such amount of money was not due to fraud, misrepresentation, or willful nondisclosure on the part of the person receiving such amount of money, and the collection thereof would be against equity or would cause extreme hardship with regard to such person. The collection of benefit overpayments which were made in the absence of fraud, misrepresentation or willful nondisclosure of required information on the part of the person who received such overpayments, may be waived by the secretary at any time if such person met all eligibility requirements of the employment security law during the weeks in which the overpayments were made.

(2) Any benefit erroneously paid which is not repaid shall bear interest at the rate of 1.5% per month or fraction of a month. If the benefit was received as a result of fraud, misrepresentation or willful nondisclosure of required information, interest shall accrue from the date of the final determination of overpayment until repayment plus interest is received by the secretary. If the overpayment was without fraud, misrepresentation or willful nondisclosure of required information, interest shall accrue upon any balance which remains unpaid two years after the final determination of overpayment is made and shall continue until payment plus accrued interest is received by the secretary. Interest collected pursuant to this section shall be paid into the special employment security fund, except that interest collected on federal administrative programs shall be returned to the federal government. Upon written request and for good cause shown, the secretary may abate any interest or portion thereof provided for by this subsection (d)(2). Interest accrued may not be paid by money deducted from any future benefits payable to such persons liable for any overpayment.

(3) Unless collection is waived by the secretary, any such amount shall be collectible in the manner provided in K.S.A. 44-717, and amendments thereto, for the collection of past due contributions. The courts of this state shall in like manner entertain actions to collect amounts of money erroneously paid as benefits, or unlawfully obtained, for which liability has accrued under the employment security law of any other state or of the federal government.

(4) In cases involving the collection of debts arising from the employment security law, the actual amount received from the United States department of treasury under the treasury offset program or its successor shall be credited to the overpayment and any fee charged by the department of treasury shall be borne by the debtor.

(e) Any employer or person who willfully fails or refuses to pay contributions, payments in lieu of contributions or benefit cost payments or attempts in any manner to evade or defeat any such contributions, payments in lieu of contributions or benefit cost payments or the payment thereof, shall be liable for the payment of such contributions, payments in lieu of contributions or benefit cost payments and, in addition to any other penalties provided by law, shall be liable to pay a penalty equal to the total amount of the contributions, payments in lieu of contributions or benefit cost payments evaded or not paid.

(f) (1) It shall be unlawful for an employing unit to knowingly obtain or attempt to obtain a reduced liability for contributions under subsection (b)(1) of K.S.A. 44-710a, and amendments thereto, through manipulation of the employer's workforce, or for an employing unit that is not an employing unit at the time it acquires the trade or business, to knowingly obtain or attempt to obtain a reduced liability for contributions under subsection (b)(5) of K.S.A. 44-710a, and amendments thereto, or any other provision of K.S.A. 44-710a, and amendments thereto, related to determining the assignment of a contribution rate, when the sole or primary purpose of the business acquisition was for the purpose of obtaining a lower rate of contributions, or for a person to knowingly advise an employing unit in such a way that results in such a violation, such employing unit or person shall be subject to the following penalties:

(A) If the person is an employer, then such employer shall be assigned the highest rate assignable under K.S.A. 44-710a, and amendments thereto, for the rate year during which such violation or attempted violation occurred and the three rate years immediately following this rate year. However, if the employer's business is already at such highest rate for any year, or if the amount of increase in the employer's rate would be less than 2% for such year, then a penalty rate of contributions of 2% of taxable wages shall be imposed for such year. Any moneys resulting from the difference of the computed rate and the penalty rate shall be remitted to the state treasurer in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the special employment security fund.

(B) If the person is not an employer, such person shall be subject to a civil money penalty of not more than \$5,000. All fines assessed and collected under this section shall be remitted to the state treasurer in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the special employment security fund.

(2) For purposes of this subsection, the term "knowingly" means having actual knowledge of or acting with deliberate ignorance or reckless disregard for the prohibition involved.

(3) For purposes of this subsection, the term "violates or attempts to violate" includes, but is not limited to, any intent to evade, misrepresentation or willful nondisclosure.

(4) (A) In addition to, or in lieu of, any civil penalty imposed by paragraph (1) if, the director of employment security or a special assistant attorney general assigned to the department of labor, has probable cause to believe that a violation of this subsection (f) should be prosecuted as a crime, a copy of any order, all investigative reports and any evidence in the possession of the division of employment security which relates to such violation, may be forwarded to the prosecuting attorney in the county in which the act or any of the acts were performed which constitute a violation of this subsection (f). Any case which a county or district attorney fails to prosecute within 90 days shall be returned promptly to the director of employment security. The special assistant attorney general assigned to the Kansas department of labor shall then prosecute the case, if, in the opinion of the special assistant attorney general, the acts or practices involved still warrant prosecution.

(B) Violation of this subsection (f) shall be a level 9, nonperson felony.

(5) The secretary shall establish procedures to identify the transfer or acquisition of a business for purposes of this section.

(6) For purposes of subsection (f):

(A) "Person" has the meaning given such term by section 7701(a)(1) of the internal revenue code of 1986;

(B) "trade or business" shall include the employer's workforce; and

(C) the provisions of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 21-5211 and 21-5212, and amendments thereto, shall apply.

(7) This subsection (f) shall be interpreted and applied in such a manner as to meet the minimum requirements contained in any guidance or regulation issued by the United States department of labor.

History: L. 1937, ch. 255, § 19; L. 1941, ch. 264, § 15; L. 1951, ch. 307, § 7; L. 1973, ch. 206, § 1; L. 1976, ch. 226, § 5; L. 1976, ch. 370, § 75; L. 1986, ch. 191, § 6; L. 1991, ch. 145, § 4; L. 2005, ch. 138, § 4; L. 2011, ch. 30, § 188; L. 2013, ch. 106, § 11; July 1.