

2003 Legislative Report

Below are laws enacted as a result of the 58th Legislative Assembly:

HB 1065 was signed into law by Governor John Hoeven after broad bipartisan support. This bill changed our organization's name to Workforce Safety & Insurance. The WSI Board of Directors believes the new name better reflects the mission and vision of the organization.

HB 1060 will ease the burden on families who lose a loved one to an on-the-job death. Effective August 1, 2003, the maximum death benefit award was increased from \$197,000 to \$250,000. The re-marriage penalty was also removed. For those workers who are catastrophically injured on the job and require home modifications, WSI can now spend up to \$50,000 to make it possible for those injured workers to live in their own homes.

HB 1149 allows for the limited release of information on the status of an employer's account. It also clarifies the penalties for failure to secure workers' compensation coverage. Additionally, this bill allows WSI to impose a penalty when an employer fails to pay medical assessments within 30 days (this was previously at 90 days).

HB 1150 changed the make-up of the WSI Board of Direc-

tors beginning August 1, 2003, Board terms were shortened from 6 to 4 years, and members will be limited to three consecutive terms. It also allowed the addition of an At-Large member to the Board and allowed the Medical representative to become a voting member, thus expanding the number of voting members to 11.

Other bills, not sponsored by the Board, were passed and affected the way WSI does business:

SB 2309 reduced the maximum penalty from \$2,000 to \$150 on townships for failure to file payroll reports.

HB 1334 required that employers, beginning August 1, 2003, supply the nine-digit zip code for all their employees on their payroll reports. This information is then provided in aggregate form only to the Commerce Department to assist in their economic development efforts by identifying how far workers are willing to commute.

Under **HCR 3050**, the Legislative Council was directed to study WSI's death benefit structure and the feasibility of creating a death benefit investment system. The study will look at determining whether the removal of the 7-year statute of limitations is warranted.



From the House Floor on January 27, 2003, in relation to **HB 1065**:

"This is not the workers' compensation of the past, this is a new agency, crafted by many of us here who fought some hard battles. It is important for all us who fought the battles in the 1990s to stop and smell the roses. We told them to get safety into the workplace and Workers Comp did that - and it is paying dividends. I think this legislative body should support the change to Workforce Safety & Insurance."

Rep. George Keiser
Chairman of the House Industry,
Business, and Labor Committee

Testimony before the House Industry,
Business, and Labor Committee Hearing
on January 21, 2003, in relation to
HB 1060:

"I've been a long-term whiner about Workers' Compensation. I want to compliment you on a new and better Workers' Compensation Bureau. I have to tell you, I believe I'm getting 100% of my benefits; however, I might have missed something. I've lost this sick feeling that they are my adversaries - but they are willing to negotiate when we have a real problem to try to find a real solution without just throwing me out the door - and it's a gigantic improvement."

Tim Effertz
Injured Worker

"The Bureau has changed its face and its positions. It's changed how it operates and changed how it delivers services. There is room for improvement with any of that, but the Bureau has made great strides in service and outreach and other things."

David Kemnitz
President of the ND AFL-CIO

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<http://www.state.nd.us/lr/>