

## Minnesota Expected to Pass Work Equity Bill Benefiting Women

By Gina K. Janeiro

May 9, 2014

The Minnesota Legislature has approved a major piece of legislation aimed at improving working conditions for women that will have a significant impact on Minnesota businesses. The [Women's Economic Security Act](#) (the "Act"), a combination of at least nine different bills, is intended to reduce the gender pay gap and to provide greater workplace protections for pregnant women and nursing mothers, among other things. The Act cleared both the Minnesota House and Senate, and Governor Mark Dayton is expected to sign it into law soon.

Some of the major anticipated changes include the following:

- 1. Add a protected class under the Minnesota Human Rights Act:* The Act expands the list of protected classes under the Minnesota Human Rights Act to include "familial status."
- 2. Pregnancy and parenting leave will be expanded to 12 weeks:* The Act doubles allowable unpaid leave under the Minnesota Parental Leave Act from 6 weeks to 12 weeks and allows employees to use leave for pregnancy-related needs.
- 3. Additional protections for pregnant and nursing women:* The Act allows employees to bring a civil action to enforce their right to express breast milk during unpaid break times. In addition, employers with at least 22 employees are required to provide reasonable minor accommodations (e.g., water, food, and a stool) or a reasonable, temporary position transfer for pregnant workers.
- 4. Certification for state contracts:* The Act requires businesses with more than 50 employees seeking state contracts worth more than \$500,000 to certify their compliance with existing equal pay laws.
- 5. Wage disclosure protection:* The Act creates new Minnesota Statutes Section 181.172 to prohibit an employer from requiring non-disclosure by an employee of his or her wages as a condition of employment or to take any adverse employment action against an employee for disclosing or discussing the employee's own wages or another employee's wages, which have been disclosed voluntarily.
- 6. Protections imposed for victims of stalking and sexual assault:* The Act expands unemployment insurance eligibility currently available to victims of domestic violence to include victims of stalking and sexual assault.
- 7. Expanded allowances for sick leave:* The Act likely will expand allowances for employees to use existing earned sick leave under certain circumstances related to sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. It also allows grandparents to use existing earned sick leave to care for an ill or injured grandchild.

We will provide further updates once the Act is signed by Governor Dayton. Please do not hesitate to contact the Jackson Lewis attorney with whom you regularly work with any questions about the possible wide-ranging effects of the Act on workplace practices and policies.

©2014 Jackson Lewis P.C. This material is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to constitute legal advice nor does it create a client-lawyer relationship between Jackson Lewis and any recipient. Recipients should consult with counsel before taking any actions based on the information contained within this material. This material may be considered attorney advertising in some jurisdictions. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.

Focused on labor and employment law since 1958, Jackson Lewis P.C.'s 950+ attorneys located in major cities nationwide consistently identify and respond to new ways workplace law intersects business. We help employers develop proactive strategies, strong policies and business-oriented solutions to cultivate high-functioning workforces that are engaged, stable and diverse, and share our clients' goals to emphasize inclusivity and respect

### Meet the Author



[Gina K. Janeiro](#)

Principal  
Minneapolis 612-359-1766  
Email

### Practices

Disability, Leave and Health  
Management  
Wage and Hour  
Workplace Training

for the contribution of every employee. For more information, visit <https://www.jacksonlewis.com>.

---

©2021 Jackson Lewis P.C. All rights reserved. Attorney Advertising. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. No client-lawyer relationship has been established by the posting or viewing of information on this website.

\*The National Operations Center serves as the firm's central administration hub and houses the firm's Facilities, Finance, Human Resources and Technology departments.