

By Representative Bitner

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to unemployment compensation;
3 amending s. 1, ch. 97-29, Laws of Florida;
4 extending for an additional year a temporary
5 reduction in certain contribution rates for
6 specified employers; amending s. 443.101, F.S.;
7 clarifying provisions relating to
8 disqualification for benefits; amending s.
9 443.111, F.S.; extending for a specified period
10 a temporary increase in the maximum weekly and
11 yearly benefit amounts for unemployment
12 compensation benefits; specifying benefit
13 years; providing an effective date.

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15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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17 Section 1. Section 1 of chapter 97-29, Laws of
18 Florida, is amended to read:

19 Section 1. Notwithstanding section 443.131(3), Florida
20 Statutes, for the 1998 and 1999 calendar years ~~year~~ or any
21 quarter thereof, the division shall subtract 0.5 percent from
22 each employer's assigned tax rate, except for those employers
23 who are assigned the initial rate or who have been assigned a
24 contribution rate of 5.4 percent or higher for more than 36
25 months. Notwithstanding section 443.131(2), Florida Statutes,
26 for the 1998 and 1999 calendar years ~~year~~, each employer whose
27 employment record has been chargeable with benefit payments
28 for less than eight calendar quarters shall pay contributions
29 at the initial rate of 2 percent.

30 Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section
31 443.101, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1 443.101 Disqualification for benefits.--An individual
2 shall be disqualified for benefits:

3 (1)(a) For the week in which he or she has voluntarily
4 left his or her work without good cause attributable to his or
5 her employing unit or in which the individual has been
6 discharged by his or her employing unit for misconduct
7 connected with his or her work, if so found by the division.
8 The term "work," as used in this paragraph, means any work,
9 whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.

10 1. Disqualification for voluntarily quitting shall
11 continue for the full period of unemployment next ensuing
12 after he or she has left his or her full-time, part-time, or
13 temporary work voluntarily without good cause and until such
14 individual has earned income equal to or in excess of 17 times
15 his or her weekly benefit amount; the term "good cause" as
16 used in this subsection includes ~~shall include~~ only such cause
17 as is attributable to the employing unit or which consists of
18 illness or disability of the individual requiring separation
19 from his or her work. No other disqualification may be
20 imposed.An individual shall not be disqualified under this
21 subsection for voluntarily leaving temporary work to return
22 immediately when called to work by the permanent employing
23 unit that temporarily terminated his or her work within the
24 previous 6 calendar months.

25 2. Disqualification for being discharged for
26 misconduct connected with his or her work shall continue for
27 the full period of unemployment next ensuing after having been
28 discharged and until such individual has become reemployed and
29 has earned income not less than 17 times his or her weekly
30 benefit amount and for not more than 52 weeks that ~~which~~
31 immediately follow such week, as determined by the division in

1 each case according to the circumstances in each case or the
2 seriousness of the misconduct, pursuant to rules of the
3 division enacted for determinations of disqualification for
4 benefits for misconduct.

5 Section 3. Subsection (3) and paragraph (a) of
6 subsection (5) of section 443.111, Florida Statutes, are
7 amended to read:

8 443.111 Payment of benefits.--

9 (3) WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT.--An individual's "weekly
10 benefit amount" shall be an amount equal to one twenty-sixth
11 of the total wages for insured work paid during that quarter
12 of the base period in which such total wages paid were the
13 highest, but not less than \$32 or more than ~~\$275~~\$250. For
14 claims with benefit years beginning July 1, 1999 ~~1997~~, through
15 June 30, 2000 ~~December 31, 1997~~, an additional 5 percent of
16 the weekly benefit amount shall be added for the first 8
17 compensable weeks of benefits paid, not to exceed ~~\$288~~\$262.
18 ~~For benefit years beginning January 1, 1998, an individual's~~
19 ~~"weekly benefit amount" shall be an amount equal to one~~
20 ~~twenty-sixth of the total wages for insured work paid during~~
21 ~~that quarter of the base period in which such total wages paid~~
22 ~~were the highest, but not less than \$32 or more than \$275. For~~
23 ~~claims with benefit years beginning January 1, 1998, through~~
24 ~~June 30, 1998, an additional 5 percent of the weekly benefit~~
25 ~~amount shall be added for the first 8 compensable weeks of~~
26 ~~benefits paid, not to exceed \$288.~~Such weekly benefit amount,
27 if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded downward to the
28 nearest full dollar amount. The maximum weekly benefit amount
29 in effect at the time the claimant establishes an individual
30 weekly benefit amount shall be the maximum benefit amount
31 applicable throughout the claimant's benefit year.

1 (5) DURATION OF BENEFITS.--
2 (a)1. Any otherwise eligible individual shall be
3 entitled during any benefit year to a total amount of benefits
4 equal to 25 percent of the total wages in the base period, not
5 to exceed \$7,150~~\$6,500~~. For claims with benefit years
6 beginning July 1, 1999~~1997~~, through June 30, 2000~~December~~
7 ~~31, 1997~~, an additional amount equal to 5 percent of the
8 weekly benefit amount multiplied by 8 shall be added to the
9 calculated total amount of benefits, the sum of which may not
10 exceed \$7,254~~\$6,596~~. For benefit years beginning January 1,
11 ~~1998~~, any otherwise eligible individual shall be entitled
12 during any benefit year to a total amount of benefits equal to
13 ~~25 percent of the total wages in the base period, not to~~
14 ~~exceed \$7,150. For claims with benefit years beginning January~~
15 ~~1, 1998, through June 30, 1998, an additional amount equal to~~
16 ~~5 percent of the weekly benefit amount multiplied by 8 shall~~
17 ~~be added to the calculated total amount of benefits, the sum~~
18 ~~of which may not exceed \$7,254.~~ However, such total amount of
19 benefits, if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded downward
20 to the nearest full dollar amount. Such benefits shall be
21 payable at a weekly rate no greater than the weekly benefit
22 amount.

23 2. For the purposes of this subsection, wages shall be
24 counted as "wages for insured work" for benefit purposes with
25 respect to any benefit year only if such benefit year begins
26 subsequent to the date on which the employing unit by whom
27 such wages were paid has satisfied the conditions of this
28 chapter with respect to becoming an employer.

29 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 1999.
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SENATE SUMMARY

Extends for an additional year a temporary reduction in certain unemployment compensation contribution rates for specified employers. Clarifies provisions relating to disqualification for unemployment compensation benefits. Extends for an additional year a temporary increase in the maximum weekly and yearly benefit amounts for unemployment compensation benefits. Specifies benefit years.