

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2                   An act relating to workers' compensation;  
3                   amending s. 61.14, F.S.; requiring a judge of  
4                   compensation claims to consider the interests  
5                   of the worker and the worker's family when  
6                   approving settlements of workers' compensation  
7                   claims; requiring appropriate recovery of any  
8                   child support arrearage from such settlements;  
9                   amending s. 61.30, F.S.; providing that gross  
10                  income includes all workers' compensation  
11                  benefits and settlements; amending s. 112.3145,  
12                  F.S.; redefining the term "specified state  
13                  employee" to include the Deputy Chief Judge of  
14                  Compensation Claims; amending s. 120.65, F.S.;  
15                  establishing requirements for the Deputy Chief  
16                  Judge; amending s. 121.055, F.S.; including the  
17                  Deputy Chief Judge in the Senior Management  
18                  Service Class of the Florida Retirement System;  
19                  conforming provisions to the transfer of the  
20                  judges of compensation claims from the  
21                  Department of Labor and Employment Security to  
22                  the Division of Administrative Hearings;  
23                  amending s. 381.004, F.S.; conforming  
24                  provisions to the transfer of the judges of  
25                  compensation claims to the Division of  
26                  Administrative Hearings; amending s. 440.02,  
27                  F.S.; revising a monetary limit in a  
28                  definition; excluding certain sports officials  
29                  from the definition of "employee"; excluding  
30                  certain work done by state prisoners and county  
31                  inmates from the definition of "employment";

1 amending s. 440.09, F.S.; excluding employees  
2 covered under the Defense Base Act from payment  
3 of benefits; amending s. 440.105, F.S.;  
4 reclassifying the Chief Judge of Compensation  
5 Claims as the Deputy Chief Judge of  
6 Compensation Claims; amending s. 440.12, F.S.;  
7 providing for direct deposit of compensation  
8 payments; amending s. 440.13, F.S.; revising  
9 requirements for submission of certain medical  
10 reports and bills; granting rehabilitation  
11 providers access to medical records; revising  
12 provider eligibility requirements; amending s.  
13 440.134, F.S.; requiring certain insurers to  
14 provide medically necessary remedial treatment,  
15 care, and attendance under certain  
16 circumstances; amending s. 440.14, F.S.;  
17 requiring an employee to provide certain  
18 information concerning concurrent employment;  
19 amending s. 440.185, F.S.; authorizing the  
20 division to contract with a private entity for  
21 collection of certain policy information;  
22 providing application; amending s. 440.192,  
23 F.S.; revising requirements and procedures for  
24 filing petitions for benefits; permitting  
25 judges to dismiss portions of a petition;  
26 specifying that dismissal of petitions is  
27 without prejudice; amending grounds for  
28 dismissal; redesignating the notice of denial  
29 as a response to petition; amending s. 440.20,  
30 F.S.; providing for payment of compensation by  
31 direct deposit under certain circumstances;

1 providing procedural guidelines for certain  
2 carriers for certain purposes; revising  
3 lump-sum settlement requirements; amending s.  
4 440.22, F.S.; excluding child support and  
5 alimony claims from general exemption of  
6 workers' compensation benefits from claims of  
7 creditors; amending s. 440.25, F.S.; revising  
8 mediation procedures; requiring written consent  
9 for additional continuances; authorizing the  
10 director of the Division of Administrative  
11 Hearings to employ mediators; requiring judges  
12 of compensation claims to file a report under  
13 certain circumstances; eliminating local rule  
14 adoption; removing the division's participation  
15 in indigency proceedings; conforming provisions  
16 to the reclassification of the Chief Judge as  
17 the Deputy Chief Judge; amending s. 440.271,  
18 F.S.; requiring the First District Court of  
19 Appeal to establish a specialized division to  
20 hear workers' compensation cases; amending s.  
21 440.29, F.S.; conforming provisions to the  
22 reclassification of the Chief Judge as the  
23 Deputy Chief Judge; amending s. 440.34, F.S.;  
24 providing for attorney's fees in a response to  
25 petition; amending s. 440.345, F.S.; revising  
26 reporting requirements; amending s. 440.38,  
27 F.S.; providing for the type of qualifying  
28 security deposit necessary to become a  
29 self-insured employer; providing requirements,  
30 procedures, and criteria; correcting a cross  
31 reference; amending s. 440.44, F.S.; revising

1 record requirements; authorizing the director  
2 of the Division of Administrative Hearings to  
3 make expenditures relating to the Office of the  
4 Judges of Compensation Claims; requiring the  
5 office to maintain certain offices and  
6 personnel; conforming provisions to the  
7 transfer of the Office of the Judges of  
8 Compensation Claims to the Division of  
9 Administrative Hearings; amending s. 440.442,  
10 F.S.; deleting Code of Judicial Conduct  
11 requirements; providing for a Code of Judicial  
12 Conduct as adopted by the Florida Supreme  
13 Court; amending s. 440.45, F.S.; eliminating  
14 the Chief Judge position; creating the position  
15 of Deputy Chief Judge of Compensation Claims;  
16 conforming provisions to the transfer of the  
17 judges of compensation claims from the  
18 Department of Labor and Employment Security to  
19 the Division of Administrative Hearings within  
20 the Department of Management Services;  
21 requiring nominees for the judges of  
22 compensation claims to meet additional  
23 experience requirements; authorizing the  
24 director of the Division of Administrative  
25 Hearings to initiate and investigate complaints  
26 against the Deputy Chief Judge and judges of  
27 compensation claims and make recommendations to  
28 the Governor; revising reporting requirements;  
29 requiring the judicial nominating commission to  
30 consider whether judges of compensation claims  
31 have met certain requirements; providing

1 procedures; authorizing the Governor to appoint  
2 certain judges of compensation claims; amending  
3 s. 440.47, F.S.; conforming provisions to the  
4 reclassification of the Chief Judge as the  
5 Deputy Chief Judge; providing that the director  
6 of the Division of Administrative Hearings must  
7 approve travel expenses; amending s. 440.59,  
8 F.S.; revising certain reporting requirements;  
9 deleting an injury reporting requirement;  
10 deleting an annual reporting requirement of the  
11 Chief Judge; amending s. 440.593, F.S.;  
12 providing the division with enforcement  
13 authority relating to electronic reporting;  
14 authorizing the division to assess a civil  
15 penalty; authorizing the division to adopt  
16 rules; amending ss. 489.114 and 489.510, F.S.;  
17 providing an exception to certain workers'  
18 compensation coverage evidence requirements;  
19 amending ss. 489.115 and 489.515, F.S.;  
20 revising certification and registration  
21 requirements for initial licensure; amending s.  
22 627.0915, F.S.; eliminating references to the  
23 Division of Safety of the Department of Labor  
24 and Employment Security in relation to rating  
25 plans' workplace safety programs; amending s.  
26 627.311, F.S.; clarifying language with respect  
27 to joint underwriters' liability for monetary  
28 damages; amending s. 627.914, F.S.; revising  
29 the requirements for reports of information by  
30 workers' compensation insurers; deleting a  
31 reporting requirement for the Division of

1 Workers' Compensation; transferring the Office  
2 of the Judges of Compensation Claims to the  
3 Division of Administrative Hearings;  
4 transferring certain positions from the  
5 Division of Workers' Compensation to the Office  
6 of Judges of Compensation Claims; providing  
7 effective dates.

8  
9 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

10  
11 Section 1. Subsection (8) of section 61.14, Florida  
12 Statutes, is amended to read:

13 61.14 Enforcement and modification of support,  
14 maintenance, or alimony agreements or orders.--

15 (8)(a) When reviewing and approving any lump-sum  
16 settlement under s. 440.20(11)(a) and (b), a judge of  
17 compensation claims must consider whether the settlement  
18 serves the interests of the worker and the worker's family,  
19 including, but not limited to, whether the settlement provides  
20 for appropriate recovery of any child-support arrearage.

21 (b) In accordance with ~~Notwithstanding~~ the provisions  
22 of s. 440.22, any compensation due or that may become due an  
23 employee under chapter 440 is exempt from garnishment,  
24 attachment, execution, and assignment of income, except for  
25 the purposes of enforcing child or spousal support  
26 obligations.

27 Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section  
28 61.30, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

29 61.30 Child support guidelines; retroactive child  
30 support.--

1           (2) Income shall be determined on a monthly basis for  
2 the obligor and for the obligee as follows:

3           (a) Gross income shall include, but is not limited to,  
4 the following items:

5           1. Salary or wages.

6           2. Bonuses, commissions, allowances, overtime, tips,  
7 and other similar payments.

8           3. Business income from sources such as  
9 self-employment, partnership, close corporations, and  
10 independent contracts. "Business income" means gross receipts  
11 minus ordinary and necessary expenses required to produce  
12 income.

13           4. Disability benefits.

14           5. All workers'~~worker's~~ compensation benefits and  
15 settlements.

16           6. Unemployment compensation.

17           7. Pension, retirement, or annuity payments.

18           8. Social security benefits.

19           9. Spousal support received from a previous marriage  
20 or court ordered in the marriage before the court.

21           10. Interest and dividends.

22           11. Rental income, which is gross receipts minus  
23 ordinary and necessary expenses required to produce the  
24 income.

25           12. Income from royalties, trusts, or estates.

26           13. Reimbursed expenses or in kind payments to the  
27 extent that they reduce living expenses.

28           14. Gains derived from dealings in property, unless  
29 the gain is nonrecurring.

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31

1           Section 3. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) and  
2 subsection (4) of section 112.3145, Florida Statutes, are  
3 amended to read:

4           112.3145 Disclosure of financial interests and clients  
5 represented before agencies.--

6           (1) For purposes of this section, unless the context  
7 otherwise requires, the term:

8           (b) "Specified state employee" means:

9           1. Public counsel created by chapter 350, an assistant  
10 state attorney, an assistant public defender, a full-time  
11 state employee who serves as counsel or assistant counsel to  
12 any state agency, the Deputy Chief Judge of Compensation  
13 Claims, a judge of compensation claims, an administrative law  
14 judge, or a hearing officer.

15           2. Any person employed in the office of the Governor  
16 or in the office of any member of the Cabinet if that person  
17 is exempt from the Career Service System, except persons  
18 employed in clerical, secretarial, or similar positions.

19           3. Each appointed secretary, assistant secretary,  
20 deputy secretary, executive director, assistant executive  
21 director, or deputy executive director of each state  
22 department, commission, board, or council; unless otherwise  
23 provided, the division director, assistant division director,  
24 deputy director, bureau chief, and assistant bureau chief of  
25 any state department or division; or any person having the  
26 power normally conferred upon such persons, by whatever title.

27           4. The superintendent or institute director of a state  
28 mental health institute established for training and research  
29 in the mental health field or the warden or director of any  
30 major state institution or facility established for  
31 corrections, training, treatment, or rehabilitation.



1           5. Business managers, purchasing agents having the  
2 power to make any purchase exceeding the threshold amount  
3 provided for in s. 287.017 for CATEGORY ONE, finance and  
4 accounting directors, personnel officers, or grants  
5 coordinators for any state agency.

6           6. Any person, other than a legislative assistant  
7 exempted by the presiding officer of the house by which the  
8 legislative assistant is employed, who is employed in the  
9 legislative branch of government, except persons employed in  
10 maintenance, clerical, secretarial, or similar positions.

11           7. Each employee of the Commission on Ethics.

12           (4) Each elected constitutional officer, state  
13 officer, local officer, and specified state employee shall  
14 file a quarterly report of the names of clients represented  
15 for a fee or commission, except for appearances in ministerial  
16 matters, before agencies at his or her level of government.  
17 For the purposes of this part, agencies of government shall be  
18 classified as state-level agencies or agencies below state  
19 level. Each local officer shall file such report with the  
20 supervisor of elections of the county in which the officer is  
21 principally employed or is a resident. Each state officer,  
22 elected constitutional officer, and specified state employee  
23 shall file such report with the commission. The report shall  
24 be filed only when a reportable representation is made during  
25 the calendar quarter and shall be filed no later than the last  
26 day of each calendar quarter, for the previous calendar  
27 quarter. Representation before any agency shall be deemed to  
28 include representation by such officer or specified state  
29 employee or by any partner or associate of the professional  
30 firm of which he or she is a member and of which he or she has  
31 actual knowledge. For the purposes of this subsection, the

1 term "representation before any agency" does not include  
2 appearances before any court or the Deputy Chief Judge ~~Judges~~  
3 of Compensation Claims or judges of compensation claims or  
4 representations on behalf of one's agency in one's official  
5 capacity. Such term does not include the preparation and  
6 filing of forms and applications merely for the purpose of  
7 obtaining or transferring a license based on a quota or a  
8 franchise of such agency or a license or operation permit to  
9 engage in a profession, business, or occupation, so long as  
10 the issuance or granting of such license, permit, or transfer  
11 does not require substantial discretion, a variance, a special  
12 consideration, or a certificate of public convenience and  
13 necessity.

14 Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 120.65, Florida  
15 Statutes, is amended to read:

16 120.65 Administrative law judges.--

17 (1) The Division of Administrative Hearings within the  
18 Department of Management Services shall be headed by a  
19 director who shall be appointed by the Administration  
20 Commission and confirmed by the Senate. The director, who  
21 shall also serve as the chief administrative law judge, and  
22 any deputy chief administrative law judge must possess the  
23 same minimum qualifications as the administrative law judges  
24 employed by the division. The Deputy Chief Judge of  
25 Compensation Claims must possess the minimum qualifications  
26 established in s. 440.45(2) and shall report to the director.  
27 The division shall be a separate budget entity, and the  
28 director shall be its agency head for all purposes. The  
29 Department of Management Services shall provide administrative  
30 support and service to the division to the extent requested by  
31 the director. The division shall not be subject to control,

1 supervision, or direction by the Department of Management  
2 Services in any manner, including, but not limited to,  
3 personnel, purchasing, transactions involving real or personal  
4 property, and budgetary matters.

5 Section 5. Paragraph (i) of subsection (1) of section  
6 121.055, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

7 121.055 Senior Management Service Class.--There is  
8 hereby established a separate class of membership within the  
9 Florida Retirement System to be known as the "Senior  
10 Management Service Class," which shall become effective  
11 February 1, 1987.

12 (1)

13 (i)1. Except as provided in subparagraph 2., effective  
14 July 1, 1999, participation in the Senior Management Service  
15 Class is compulsory for any member of the Florida Retirement  
16 System who is employed as the Deputy Chief Judge of  
17 Compensation Claims or as a judge of compensation claims with  
18 the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims within the  
19 Division of Administrative Hearings ~~Department of Labor and~~  
20 ~~Employment Security~~.

21 2. In lieu of participating in the Senior Management  
22 Service Class, the Deputy Chief Judge of Compensation Claims  
23 or a judge of compensation claims may participate in the  
24 Senior Management Service Optional Annuity Program established  
25 under subsection (6).

26 Section 6. Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section  
27 381.004, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

28 381.004 HIV testing.--

29 (3) HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS TESTING; INFORMED  
30 CONSENT; RESULTS; COUNSELING; CONFIDENTIALITY.--

31

1           (e) Except as provided in this section, the identity  
2 of any person upon whom a test has been performed and test  
3 results are confidential and exempt from the provisions of s.  
4 119.07(1). No person who has obtained or has knowledge of a  
5 test result pursuant to this section may disclose or be  
6 compelled to disclose the identity of any person upon whom a  
7 test is performed, or the results of such a test in a manner  
8 which permits identification of the subject of the test,  
9 except to the following persons:

10           1. The subject of the test or the subject's legally  
11 authorized representative.

12           2. Any person, including third-party payors,  
13 designated in a legally effective release of the test results  
14 executed prior to or after the test by the subject of the test  
15 or the subject's legally authorized representative. The test  
16 subject may in writing authorize the disclosure of the test  
17 subject's HIV test results to third party payors, who need not  
18 be specifically identified, and to other persons to whom the  
19 test subject subsequently issues a general release of medical  
20 information. A general release without such prior written  
21 authorization is not sufficient to release HIV test results.

22           3. An authorized agent or employee of a health  
23 facility or health care provider if the health facility or  
24 health care provider itself is authorized to obtain the test  
25 results, the agent or employee participates in the  
26 administration or provision of patient care or handles or  
27 processes specimens of body fluids or tissues, and the agent  
28 or employee has a need to know such information. The  
29 department shall adopt a rule defining which persons have a  
30 need to know pursuant to this subparagraph.

31

1           4. Health care providers consulting between themselves  
2 or with health care facilities to determine diagnosis and  
3 treatment. For purposes of this subparagraph, health care  
4 providers shall include licensed health care professionals  
5 employed by or associated with state, county, or municipal  
6 detention facilities when such health care professionals are  
7 acting exclusively for the purpose of providing diagnoses or  
8 treatment of persons in the custody of such facilities.

9           5. The department, in accordance with rules for  
10 reporting and controlling the spread of disease, as otherwise  
11 provided by state law.

12           6. A health facility or health care provider which  
13 procures, processes, distributes, or uses:

14           a. A human body part from a deceased person, with  
15 respect to medical information regarding that person; or

16           b. Semen provided prior to July 6, 1988, for the  
17 purpose of artificial insemination.

18           7. Health facility staff committees, for the purposes  
19 of conducting program monitoring, program evaluation, or  
20 service reviews pursuant to chapters 395 and 766.

21           8. Authorized medical or epidemiological researchers  
22 who may not further disclose any identifying characteristics  
23 or information.

24           9. A person allowed access by a court order which is  
25 issued in compliance with the following provisions:

26           a. No court of this state shall issue such order  
27 unless the court finds that the person seeking the test  
28 results has demonstrated a compelling need for the test  
29 results which cannot be accommodated by other means. In  
30 assessing compelling need, the court shall weigh the need for  
31 disclosure against the privacy interest of the test subject

1 and the public interest which may be disserved by disclosure  
2 which deters blood, organ, and semen donation and future human  
3 immunodeficiency virus-related testing or which may lead to  
4 discrimination. This paragraph shall not apply to blood bank  
5 donor records.

6 b. Pleadings pertaining to disclosure of test results  
7 shall substitute a pseudonym for the true name of the subject  
8 of the test. The disclosure to the parties of the subject's  
9 true name shall be communicated confidentially in documents  
10 not filed with the court.

11 c. Before granting any such order, the court shall  
12 provide the individual whose test result is in question with  
13 notice and a reasonable opportunity to participate in the  
14 proceedings if he or she is not already a party.

15 d. Court proceedings as to disclosure of test results  
16 shall be conducted in camera, unless the subject of the test  
17 agrees to a hearing in open court or unless the court  
18 determines that a public hearing is necessary to the public  
19 interest and the proper administration of justice.

20 e. Upon the issuance of an order to disclose test  
21 results, the court shall impose appropriate safeguards against  
22 unauthorized disclosure which shall specify the persons who  
23 may have access to the information, the purposes for which the  
24 information shall be used, and appropriate prohibitions on  
25 future disclosure.

26 10. A person allowed access by order of a judge of  
27 compensation claims of the Division of Administrative Hearings  
28 ~~Workers' Compensation of the Department of Labor and~~  
29 ~~Employment Security~~. A judge of compensation claims shall not  
30 issue such order unless he or she finds that the person  
31 seeking the test results has demonstrated a compelling need

1 for the test results which cannot be accommodated by other  
2 means.

3           11. Those employees of the department or of  
4 child-placing or child-caring agencies or of family foster  
5 homes, licensed pursuant to s. 409.175, who are directly  
6 involved in the placement, care, control, or custody of such  
7 test subject and who have a need to know such information;  
8 adoptive parents of such test subject; or any adult custodian,  
9 any adult relative, or any person responsible for the child's  
10 welfare, if the test subject was not tested under subparagraph  
11 (b)2. and if a reasonable attempt has been made to locate and  
12 inform the legal guardian of a test result. The department  
13 shall adopt a rule to implement this subparagraph.

14           12. Those employees of residential facilities or of  
15 community-based care programs that care for developmentally  
16 disabled persons, pursuant to chapter 393, who are directly  
17 involved in the care, control, or custody of such test subject  
18 and who have a need to know such information.

19           13. A health care provider involved in the delivery of  
20 a child can note the mother's HIV test results in the child's  
21 medical record.

22           14. Medical personnel or nonmedical personnel who have  
23 been subject to a significant exposure during the course of  
24 medical practice or in the performance of professional duties,  
25 or individuals who are the subject of the significant exposure  
26 as provided in subparagraphs (h)10., 11., and 13.

27           15. The medical examiner shall disclose positive HIV  
28 test results to the department in accordance with rules for  
29 reporting and controlling the spread of disease.

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1 Section 7. Subsection (4), paragraph (d) of subsection  
2 (14), and paragraph (c) of subsection (16) of section 440.02,  
3 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

4 440.02 Definitions.--When used in this chapter, unless  
5 the context clearly requires otherwise, the following terms  
6 shall have the following meanings:

7 (4) "Casual" as used in this section refers ~~shall be~~  
8 ~~taken to refer~~ only to employments for when the work that is  
9 anticipated ~~contemplated is~~ to be completed in ~~not exceeding~~  
10 10 working days or less, without regard to the number of  
11 persons employed, and at a ~~when the~~ total labor cost of ~~such~~  
12 ~~work is~~ less than \$500~~\$100~~.

13 (14)

14 (d) "Employee" does not include:

15 1. An independent contractor, if:

16 a. The independent contractor maintains a separate  
17 business with his or her own work facility, truck, equipment,  
18 materials, or similar accommodations;

19 b. The independent contractor holds or has applied for  
20 a federal employer identification number, unless the  
21 independent contractor is a sole proprietor who is not  
22 required to obtain a federal employer identification number  
23 under state or federal requirements;

24 c. The independent contractor performs or agrees to  
25 perform specific services or work for specific amounts of  
26 money and controls the means of performing the services or  
27 work;

28 d. The independent contractor incurs the principal  
29 expenses related to the service or work that he or she  
30 performs or agrees to perform;

31



1 e. The independent contractor is responsible for the  
2 satisfactory completion of work or services that he or she  
3 performs or agrees to perform and is or could be held liable  
4 for a failure to complete the work or services;

5 f. The independent contractor receives compensation  
6 for work or services performed for a commission or on a  
7 per-job or competitive-bid basis and not on any other basis;

8 g. The independent contractor may realize a profit or  
9 suffer a loss in connection with performing work or services;

10 h. The independent contractor has continuing or  
11 recurring business liabilities or obligations; and

12 i. The success or failure of the independent  
13 contractor's business depends on the relationship of business  
14 receipts to expenditures.

15  
16 However, the determination as to whether an individual  
17 included in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual of  
18 1987, Industry Numbers 0711, 0721, 0722, 0751, 0761, 0762,  
19 0781, 0782, 0783, 0811, 0831, 0851, 2411, 2421, 2435, 2436,  
20 2448, or 2449, or a newspaper delivery person, is an  
21 independent contractor is governed not by the criteria in this  
22 paragraph but by common-law principles, giving due  
23 consideration to the business activity of the individual.

24 2. A real estate salesperson or agent, if that person  
25 agrees, in writing, to perform for remuneration solely by way  
26 of commission.

27 3. Bands, orchestras, and musical and theatrical  
28 performers, including disk jockeys, performing in licensed  
29 premises as defined in chapter 562, if a written contract  
30 evidencing an independent contractor relationship is entered  
31 into before the commencement of such entertainment.

1           4. An owner-operator of a motor vehicle who transports  
2 property under a written contract with a motor carrier which  
3 evidences a relationship by which the owner-operator assumes  
4 the responsibility of an employer for the performance of the  
5 contract, if the owner-operator is required to furnish the  
6 necessary motor vehicle equipment and all costs incidental to  
7 the performance of the contract, including, but not limited  
8 to, fuel, taxes, licenses, repairs, and hired help; and the  
9 owner-operator is paid a commission for transportation service  
10 and is not paid by the hour or on some other time-measured  
11 basis.

12           5. A person whose employment is both casual and not in  
13 the course of the trade, business, profession, or occupation  
14 of the employer.

15           6. A volunteer, except a volunteer worker for the  
16 state or a county, municipality, or other governmental entity.  
17 A person who does not receive monetary remuneration for  
18 services is presumed to be a volunteer unless there is  
19 substantial evidence that a valuable consideration was  
20 intended by both employer and employee. For purposes of this  
21 chapter, the term "volunteer" includes, but is not limited to:

22           a. Persons who serve in private nonprofit agencies and  
23 who receive no compensation other than expenses in an amount  
24 less than or equivalent to the standard mileage and per diem  
25 expenses provided to salaried employees in the same agency or,  
26 if such agency does not have salaried employees who receive  
27 mileage and per diem, then such volunteers who receive no  
28 compensation other than expenses in an amount less than or  
29 equivalent to the customary mileage and per diem paid to  
30 salaried workers in the community as determined by the  
31 division; and

1           b. Volunteers participating in federal programs  
2 established under Pub. L. No. 93-113.

3           7. Any officer of a corporation who elects to be  
4 exempt from this chapter.

5           8. A sole proprietor or officer of a corporation who  
6 actively engages in the construction industry, and a partner  
7 in a partnership that is actively engaged in the construction  
8 industry, who elects to be exempt from the provisions of this  
9 chapter. Such sole proprietor, officer, or partner is not an  
10 employee for any reason until the notice of revocation of  
11 election filed pursuant to s. 440.05 is effective.

12           9. An exercise rider who does not work for a single  
13 horse farm or breeder, and who is compensated for riding on a  
14 case-by-case basis, provided a written contract is entered  
15 into prior to the commencement of such activity which  
16 evidences that an employee/employer relationship does not  
17 exist.

18           10. A taxicab, limousine, or other passenger  
19 vehicle-for-hire driver who operates said vehicles pursuant to  
20 a written agreement with a company which provides any  
21 dispatch, marketing, insurance, communications, or other  
22 services under which the driver and any fees or charges paid  
23 by the driver to the company for such services are not  
24 conditioned upon, or expressed as a proportion of, fare  
25 revenues.

26           11. A person who performs services as a sports  
27 official for an entity sponsoring an interscholastic sports  
28 event or for a public entity or private, nonprofit  
29 organization that sponsors an amateur sports event. For  
30 purposes of this subparagraph, such a person is an independent  
31 contractor. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term

1 "sports official" means any person who is a neutral  
2 participant in a sports event, including, but not limited to,  
3 umpires, referees, judges, linespersons, scorekeepers, or  
4 timekeepers. This subparagraph does not apply to any person  
5 employed by a district school board who serves as a sports  
6 official as required by the employing school board or who  
7 serves as a sports official as part of his or her  
8 responsibilities during normal school hours.

9 (16)

10 (c) "Employment" does not include service performed by  
11 or as:

12 1. Domestic servants in private homes.

13 2. Agricultural labor performed on a farm in the  
14 employ of a bona fide farmer, or association of farmers, that  
15 ~~who~~ employs 5 or fewer regular employees and that ~~who~~ employs  
16 fewer than 12 other employees at one time for seasonal  
17 agricultural labor that is completed in less than 30 days,  
18 provided such seasonal employment does not exceed 45 days in  
19 the same calendar year. The term "farm" includes stock, dairy,  
20 poultry, fruit, fur-bearing animals, fish, and truck farms,  
21 ranches, nurseries, and orchards. The term "agricultural  
22 labor" includes field foremen, timekeepers, checkers, and  
23 other farm labor supervisory personnel.

24 3. Professional athletes, such as professional boxers,  
25 wrestlers, baseball, football, basketball, hockey, polo,  
26 tennis, jai alai, and similar players, and motorsports teams  
27 competing in a motor racing event as defined in s. 549.08.

28 4. Labor under a sentence of a court to perform  
29 community services as provided in s. 316.193.

30  
31

1           5. State prisoners or county inmates, except those  
2 performing services for private employers or those enumerated  
3 in s. 948.03(8)(a).

4           Section 8. Subsection (2) of section 440.09, Florida  
5 Statutes, is amended to read:

6           440.09 Coverage.--

7           (2) Benefits are not payable in respect of the  
8 disability or death of any employee covered by the Federal  
9 Employer's Liability Act, the Longshoremen's and Harbor  
10 Worker's Compensation Act, the Defense Base Act, or the Jones  
11 Act.

12           Section 9. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
13 440.105, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

14           440.105 Prohibited activities; reports; penalties;  
15 limitations.--

16           (3) Whoever violates any provision of this subsection  
17 commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as  
18 provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

19           (b) It is ~~shall be~~ unlawful for any attorney or other  
20 person, in his or her individual capacity or in his or her  
21 capacity as a public or private employee, or for any firm,  
22 corporation, partnership, or association to receive any fee or  
23 other consideration or any gratuity from a person on account  
24 of services rendered for a person in connection with any  
25 proceedings arising under this chapter, unless such fee,  
26 consideration, or gratuity is approved by a judge of  
27 compensation claims or by the Deputy Chief Judge of  
28 Compensation Claims.

29           Section 10. Subsection (1) of section 440.12, Florida  
30 Statutes, is amended to read:

31

1           440.12 Time for commencement and limits on weekly rate  
2 of compensation.--

3           (1) No compensation shall be allowed for the first 7  
4 days of the disability, except benefits provided for in s.  
5 440.13. However, if the injury results in disability of more  
6 than 21 days, compensation shall be allowed from the  
7 commencement of the disability. All weekly compensation  
8 payments, except for the first payment, shall be paid by check  
9 or, if authorized by the employee, deposited directly into the  
10 employee's account at a financial institution. As used in this  
11 subsection, the term "financial institution" means a financial  
12 institution as defined in s. 655.005(1)(h).

13           Section 11. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) and  
14 paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (4) of section 440.13,  
15 Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (f) is added to  
16 subsection (2) of said section, to read:

17           440.13 Medical services and supplies; penalty for  
18 violations; limitations.--

19           (2) MEDICAL TREATMENT; DUTY OF EMPLOYER TO FURNISH.--

20           (f) Upon the written request of the employee, the  
21 carrier shall give the employee the opportunity for one change  
22 of physician during the course of treatment for any one  
23 accident. The employee shall be entitled to select another  
24 physician from among not fewer than three carrier-authorized  
25 physicians who are not professionally affiliated.

26           (3) PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY; AUTHORIZATION.--

27           (a) As a condition to eligibility for payment under  
28 this chapter, a health care provider who renders services must  
29 be a certified health care provider and must receive  
30 authorization from the carrier before providing treatment.  
31 This paragraph does not apply to emergency care. The division

1 shall adopt rules to implement the certification of health  
 2 care providers. ~~As a one-time prerequisite to obtaining~~  
 3 ~~certification, the division shall require each physician to~~  
 4 ~~demonstrate proof of completion of a minimum 5-hour course~~  
 5 ~~that covers the subject areas of cost containment, utilization~~  
 6 ~~control, ergonomics, and the practice parameters adopted by~~  
 7 ~~the division governing the physician's field of practice. The~~  
 8 ~~division shall coordinate with the Agency for Health Care~~  
 9 ~~Administration, the Florida Medical Association, the Florida~~  
 10 ~~Osteopathic Medical Association, the Florida Chiropractic~~  
 11 ~~Association, the Florida Podiatric Medical Association, the~~  
 12 ~~Florida Optometric Association, the Florida Dental~~  
 13 ~~Association, and other health professional organizations and~~  
 14 ~~their respective boards as deemed necessary by the Agency for~~  
 15 ~~Health Care Administration in complying with this subsection.~~  
 16 ~~No later than October 1, 1994, the division shall adopt rules~~  
 17 ~~regarding the criteria and procedures for approval of courses~~  
 18 ~~and the filing of proof of completion by the physicians.~~

19 (4) NOTICE OF TREATMENT TO CARRIER; FILING WITH  
 20 DIVISION.--

21 (b) Upon the request of the Division of Workers'  
 22 Compensation, each medical report or bill obtained or received  
 23 by the employer, the carrier, or the injured employee, or the  
 24 attorney for the employer, carrier, or injured employee, with  
 25 respect to the remedial treatment, or care, and attendance of  
 26 the injured employee, including any report of an examination,  
 27 diagnosis, or disability evaluation, must be filed with the  
 28 Division of Workers' Compensation pursuant to rules adopted by  
 29 the division. The health care provider shall also furnish to  
 30 the injured employee or to his or her attorney, on demand, a  
 31 copy of his or her office chart, records, and reports, and may

1 charge the injured employee an amount authorized by the  
 2 division for the copies. Each such health care provider shall  
 3 provide to the division ~~any additional~~ information about the  
 4 remedial treatment, care, and attendance which ~~that~~ the  
 5 division reasonably requests.

6 (c) It is the policy for the administration of the  
 7 workers' compensation system that there be reasonable access  
 8 to medical information by all parties to facilitate the  
 9 self-executing features of the law. Notwithstanding the  
 10 limitations in s. 456.057 and subject to the limitations in s.  
 11 381.004, upon the request of the employer, the carrier, an  
 12 authorized qualified rehabilitation provider, or the attorney  
 13 for the employer or carrier ~~either of them~~, the medical  
 14 records of an injured employee must be furnished to those  
 15 persons and the medical condition of the injured employee must  
 16 be discussed with those persons, if the records and the  
 17 discussions are restricted to conditions relating to the  
 18 workplace injury. Any such discussions may be held before or  
 19 after the filing of a claim without the knowledge, consent, or  
 20 presence of any other party or his or her agent or  
 21 representative. A health care provider who willfully refuses  
 22 to provide medical records or to discuss the medical condition  
 23 of the injured employee, after a reasonable request is made  
 24 for such information pursuant to this subsection, shall be  
 25 subject by the division to one or more of the penalties set  
 26 forth in paragraph (8)(b).

27 Section 12. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (2)  
 28 of section 440.134, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

29 440.134 Workers' compensation managed care  
 30 arrangement.--

31



1           (2)(a)~~(b)~~ ~~Effective January 1, 1997,~~ The employer may  
 2 ~~shall~~, subject to the terms and limitations specified  
 3 elsewhere in this section and chapter, furnish to the employee  
 4 solely through managed care arrangements such medically  
 5 necessary remedial treatment, care, and attendance for such  
 6 period as the nature of the injury or the process of recovery  
 7 requires.

8           **(b)**~~(a)~~ The agency shall authorize an insurer to offer  
 9 or utilize a workers' compensation managed care arrangement  
 10 after the insurer files a completed application along with the  
 11 payment of a \$1,000 application fee, and upon the agency's  
 12 being satisfied that the applicant has the ability to provide  
 13 quality of care consistent with the prevailing professional  
 14 standards of care and the insurer and its workers'  
 15 compensation managed care arrangement otherwise meets the  
 16 requirements of this section. No insurer may offer or utilize  
 17 a managed care arrangement without such authorization. The  
 18 authorization, unless sooner suspended or revoked, shall  
 19 automatically expire 2 years after the date of issuance unless  
 20 renewed by the insurer. The authorization shall be renewed  
 21 upon application for renewal and payment of a renewal fee of  
 22 \$1,000, provided that the insurer is in compliance with the  
 23 requirements of this section and any rules adopted hereunder.  
 24 An application for renewal of the authorization shall be made  
 25 90 days prior to expiration of the authorization, on forms  
 26 provided by the agency. The renewal application shall not  
 27 require the resubmission of any documents previously filed  
 28 with the agency if such documents have remained valid and  
 29 unchanged since their original filing.

30           Section 13. Subsection (5) is added to section 440.14,  
 31 Florida Statutes, to read:

1           440.14 Determination of pay.--

2           (5)(a) If the lost wages from concurrent employment  
3 are used in calculating the average weekly wage, the employee  
4 is responsible for providing information concerning the loss  
5 of earnings from the concurrent employment.

6           (b) The employee waives any entitlement to interest,  
7 penalties, and attorney's fees during the period in which the  
8 employee has not provided information concerning the loss of  
9 earnings from concurrent employment. Carriers are not subject  
10 to penalties by the division under s. 440.20(8)(b) and (c) for  
11 unpaid compensation related to concurrent employment during  
12 the period in which the employee has not provided information  
13 concerning the loss of earnings from concurrent employment.

14           Section 14. Subsection (7) of section 440.185, Florida  
15 Statutes, is amended to read:

16           440.185 Notice of injury or death; reports; penalties  
17 for violations.--

18           (7) Every carrier shall file with the division within  
19 21 days after the issuance of a policy or contract of  
20 insurance such policy information as the division requires ~~may~~  
21 ~~require~~, including notice of whether the policy is a minimum  
22 premium policy. Notice of cancellation or expiration of a  
23 policy as set out in s. 440.42(3) shall be mailed to the  
24 division in accordance with rules adopted ~~promulgated~~ by the  
25 division under chapter 120. The division may contract with a  
26 private entity for the collection of policy information  
27 required to be filed by carriers under this subsection and the  
28 receipt of notices of cancellation or expiration of a policy  
29 required to be filed by carriers under s. 440.42(3). The  
30 submission of policy information or notices of cancellation or  
31

1 expiration to the contracted private entity satisfies the  
2 filing requirements of this subsection and s. 440.42(3).

3 Section 15. Subsections (1), (2), (5), and (8) of  
4 section 440.192, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

5 440.192 Procedure for resolving benefit disputes.--

6 (1) Subject to s. 440.191, any employee who has not  
7 received a benefit to which the employee believes she or he is  
8 entitled under this chapter shall file by certified mail, or  
9 by electronic means approved by the Deputy Chief Judge, with  
10 the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims a petition for  
11 benefits which meets the requirements of this section. The  
12 division shall inform employees of the location of the Office  
13 of the Judges of Compensation Claims for purposes of filing a  
14 petition for benefits. The employee shall also serve copies  
15 of the petition for benefits by certified mail, or by  
16 electronic means approved by the Deputy Chief Judge, upon the  
17 employer and, the employer's carrier, and the division in  
18 ~~Fallahassee a petition for benefits that meets the~~  
19 ~~requirements of this section. The Deputy Chief Judge shall~~  
20 ~~refer the petitions to the judges of compensation claims. The~~  
21 ~~division shall refer the petition to the Office of the Judges~~  
22 ~~of Compensation Claims.~~

23 (2) Upon receipt, the Office of the Judges of  
24 Compensation Claims shall review each petition and shall  
25 dismiss each petition or any portion of such a petition, upon  
26 the judge's its own motion or upon the motion of any party,  
27 that does not on its face specifically identify or itemize the  
28 following:

29 (a) Name, address, telephone number, and social  
30 security number of the employee.

31

- 1 (b) Name, address, and telephone number of the  
2 employer.
- 3 (c) A detailed description of the injury and cause of  
4 the injury, including the location of the occurrence and the  
5 date or dates of the accident.
- 6 (d) A detailed description of the employee's job, work  
7 responsibilities, and work the employee was performing when  
8 the injury occurred.
- 9 (e) The time period for which compensation and the  
10 specific classification of compensation were ~~was~~ not timely  
11 provided.
- 12 (f) Date of maximum medical improvement, character of  
13 disability, and specific statement of all benefits or  
14 compensation that the employee is seeking.
- 15 (g) All specific travel costs to which the employee  
16 believes she or he is entitled, including dates of travel and  
17 purpose of travel, means of transportation, and mileage and  
18 including the date the request for mileage was filed with the  
19 carrier and a copy of the request filed with the carrier.
- 20 (h) Specific listing of all medical charges alleged  
21 unpaid, including the name and address of the medical  
22 provider, the amounts due, and the specific dates of  
23 treatment.
- 24 (i) The type or nature of treatment care or attendance  
25 sought and the justification for such treatment.
- 26 (j) Specific explanation of any other disputed issue  
27 that a judge of compensation claims will be called to rule  
28 upon.
- 29
- 30
- 31

1 The dismissal of any petition or portion of such a petition  
2 under this section is without prejudice and does not require a  
3 hearing.

4 (5) All motions to dismiss must state with  
5 particularity the basis for the motion. The judge of  
6 compensation claims shall enter an order upon such motions  
7 without hearing, unless good cause for hearing is shown. When  
8 any petition or portion of a petition is dismissed for lack of  
9 specificity under this subsection, the claimant must be  
10 allowed 20 days after the date of the order of dismissal in  
11 which to file an amended petition. Any grounds for dismissal  
12 for lack of specificity under this section which are not  
13 asserted within 30 days after receipt of the petition for  
14 benefits are thereby waived.

15 (8) Within 14 days after receipt of a petition for  
16 benefits by certified mail, the carrier must either pay the  
17 requested benefits without prejudice to its right to deny  
18 within 120 days from receipt of the petition or file a  
19 response to petition ~~notice of denial~~ with the Office of the  
20 Judges of Compensation Claims ~~division~~. The carrier must list  
21 all benefits requested but not paid and explain its  
22 justification for nonpayment in the response to petition  
23 ~~notice of denial~~. A carrier that does not deny compensability  
24 in accordance with s. 440.20(4) is deemed to have accepted the  
25 employee's injuries as compensable, unless it can establish  
26 material facts relevant to the issue of compensability that  
27 could not have been discovered through reasonable  
28 investigation within the 120-day period. The carrier shall  
29 provide copies of the response ~~notice~~ to the filing party,  
30 employer, and claimant by certified mail.

31

1           Section 16. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) and  
2 subsections (4), (6), and (11) of section 440.20, Florida  
3 Statutes, are amended to read:

4           440.20 Time for payment of compensation; penalties for  
5 late payment.--

6           (1)(a) Unless it denies compensability or entitlement  
7 to benefits, the carrier shall pay compensation directly to  
8 the employee as required by ss. 440.14, 440.15, and 440.16, in  
9 accordance with the obligations set forth in such sections. If  
10 authorized by the employee, the carrier's obligation to pay  
11 compensation directly to the employee is satisfied when the  
12 carrier directly deposits, by electronic transfer or other  
13 means, compensation into the employee's account at a financial  
14 institution. As used in this paragraph, the term "financial  
15 institution" means a financial institution as defined in s.  
16 655.005(1)(h). Compensation by direct deposit is considered  
17 paid on the date the funds become available for withdrawal by  
18 the employee.

19           (4) If the carrier is uncertain of its obligation to  
20 provide benefits or compensation, it may initiate payment  
21 without prejudice and without admitting liability. The carrier  
22 shall immediately and in good faith commence investigation of  
23 the employee's entitlement to benefits under this chapter and  
24 shall admit or deny compensability within 120 days after the  
25 initial provision of compensation or benefits as required  
26 under subsection (2) or s. 440.192(8). Upon commencement of  
27 payment as required under subsection (2) or s. 440.192(8), the  
28 carrier shall provide written notice to the employee that it  
29 has elected to pay all or part of the claim pending further  
30 investigation, and that it will advise the employee of claim  
31 acceptance or denial within 120 days. A carrier that fails to

1 deny compensability within 120 days after the initial  
2 provision of benefits or payment of compensation as required  
3 under subsection (2) or s. 440.192(8) waives the right to deny  
4 compensability, unless the carrier can establish material  
5 facts relevant to the issue of compensability that it could  
6 not have discovered through reasonable investigation within  
7 the 120-day period. The initial provision of compensation or  
8 benefits, for purposes of this subsection, means the first  
9 installment of compensation or benefits to be paid by the  
10 carrier under subsection (2) or pursuant to a petition for  
11 benefits under s. 440.192(8).

12 (6) If any installment of compensation for death or  
13 dependency benefits, disability, permanent impairment, or wage  
14 loss payable without an award is not paid within 7 days after  
15 it becomes due, as provided in subsection (2), subsection (3),  
16 or subsection (4), there shall be added to such unpaid  
17 installment a punitive penalty of an amount equal to 20  
18 percent of the unpaid installment or \$5, which shall be paid  
19 at the same time as, but in addition to, such installment of  
20 compensation, unless notice is filed under subsection (4) or  
21 unless such nonpayment results from conditions over which the  
22 employer or carrier had no control. When any installment of  
23 compensation payable without an award has not been paid within  
24 7 days after it became due and the claimant concludes the  
25 prosecution of the claim before a judge of compensation claims  
26 without having specifically claimed additional compensation in  
27 the nature of a penalty under this section, the claimant will  
28 be deemed to have acknowledged that, owing to conditions over  
29 which the employer or carrier had no control, such installment  
30 could not be paid within the period prescribed for payment and  
31 to have waived the right to claim such penalty. However,

1 during the course of a hearing, the judge of compensation  
2 claims shall on her or his own motion raise the question of  
3 whether such penalty should be awarded or excused. The  
4 division may assess without a hearing the punitive penalty  
5 against either the employer or the insurance carrier,  
6 depending upon who was at fault in causing the delay. The  
7 insurance policy cannot provide that this sum will be paid by  
8 the carrier if the division or the judge of compensation  
9 claims determines that the punitive penalty should be made by  
10 the employer rather than the carrier. Any additional  
11 installment of compensation paid by the carrier pursuant to  
12 this section shall be paid directly to the employee by check  
13 or, if authorized by the employee, by direct deposit into the  
14 employee's account at a financial institution. As used in this  
15 subsection, the term "financial institution" means a financial  
16 institution as defined in s. 655.005(1)(h).

17 (11)(a) When a claimant is not represented by counsel,  
18 upon joint petition of all interested parties, a lump-sum  
19 payment in exchange for the employer's or carrier's release  
20 from liability for future medical expenses, as well as future  
21 payments of compensation expenses and any other benefits  
22 provided under this chapter, shall be allowed at any time in  
23 any case in which the employer or carrier has filed a written  
24 notice of denial within 120 days after the employer receives  
25 notice ~~date~~ of the injury, and the judge of compensation  
26 claims at a hearing to consider the settlement proposal finds  
27 a justiciable controversy as to legal or medical  
28 compensability of the claimed injury or the alleged accident.  
29 The employer or carrier may not pay any attorney's fees on  
30 behalf of the claimant for any settlement under this section  
31 unless expressly authorized elsewhere in this chapter. Upon



1 the joint petition of all interested parties and after giving  
2 due consideration to the interests of all interested parties,  
3 the judge of compensation claims may enter a compensation  
4 order approving and authorizing the discharge of the liability  
5 of the employer for compensation and remedial treatment, care,  
6 and attendance, as well as rehabilitation expenses, by the  
7 payment of a lump sum. Such a compensation order so entered  
8 upon joint petition of all interested parties is not subject  
9 to modification or review under s. 440.28. If the settlement  
10 proposal together with supporting evidence is not approved by  
11 the judge of compensation claims, it shall be considered void.  
12 Upon approval of a lump-sum settlement under this subsection,  
13 the judge of compensation claims shall send a report to the  
14 Chief Judge of the amount of the settlement and a statement of  
15 the nature of the controversy. The Chief Judge shall keep a  
16 record of all such reports filed by each judge of compensation  
17 claims and shall submit to the Legislature a summary of all  
18 such reports filed under this subsection annually by September  
19 15.

20 (b) When a claimant is not represented by counsel,  
21 upon joint petition of all interested parties, a lump-sum  
22 payment in exchange for the employer's or carrier's release  
23 from liability for future medical expenses, as well as future  
24 payments of compensation and rehabilitation expenses, and any  
25 other benefits provided under this chapter, may be allowed at  
26 any time in any case after the injured employee has attained  
27 maximum medical improvement. An employer or carrier may not  
28 pay any attorney's fees on behalf of the claimant for any  
29 settlement, unless expressly authorized elsewhere in this  
30 chapter. A compensation order so entered upon joint petition  
31 of all interested parties shall not be subject to modification

1 or review under s. 440.28. However, a judge of compensation  
2 claims is not required to approve any award for lump-sum  
3 payment when it is determined by the judge of compensation  
4 claims that the payment being made is in excess of the value  
5 of benefits the claimant would be entitled to under this  
6 chapter. The judge of compensation claims shall make or cause  
7 to be made such investigations as she or he considers  
8 necessary, in each case in which the parties have stipulated  
9 that a proposed final settlement of liability of the employer  
10 for compensation shall not be subject to modification or  
11 review under s. 440.28, to determine whether such final  
12 disposition will definitely aid the rehabilitation of the  
13 injured worker or otherwise is clearly for the best interests  
14 of the person entitled to compensation and, in her or his  
15 discretion, may have an investigation made by the  
16 Rehabilitation Section of the Division of Workers'  
17 Compensation. The joint petition and the report of any  
18 investigation so made will be deemed a part of the proceeding.  
19 An employer shall have the right to appear at any hearing  
20 pursuant to this subsection which relates to the discharge of  
21 such employer's liability and to present testimony at such  
22 hearing. The carrier shall provide reasonable notice to the  
23 employer of the time and date of any such hearing and inform  
24 the employer of her or his rights to appear and testify. ~~When~~  
25 ~~the claimant is represented by counsel or when the claimant~~  
26 ~~and carrier or employer are represented by counsel, final~~  
27 ~~approval of the lump-sum settlement agreement, as provided for~~  
28 ~~in a joint petition and stipulation, shall be approved by~~  
29 ~~entry of an order within 7 days after the filing of such joint~~  
30 ~~petition and stipulation without a hearing, unless the judge~~  
31 ~~of compensation claims determines, in her or his discretion,~~

1 ~~that additional testimony is needed before such settlement can~~  
2 ~~be approved or disapproved and so notifies the parties.~~The  
3 probability of the death of the injured employee or other  
4 person entitled to compensation before the expiration of the  
5 period during which such person is entitled to compensation  
6 shall, in the absence of special circumstances making such  
7 course improper, be determined in accordance with the most  
8 recent United States Life Tables published by the National  
9 Office of Vital Statistics of the United States Department of  
10 Health and Human Services. The probability of the happening of  
11 any other contingency affecting the amount or duration of the  
12 compensation, except the possibility of the remarriage of a  
13 surviving spouse, shall be disregarded. As a condition of  
14 approving a lump-sum payment to a surviving spouse, the judge  
15 of compensation claims, in the judge of compensation claims'  
16 discretion, may require security which will ensure that, in  
17 the event of the remarriage of such surviving spouse, any  
18 unaccrued future payments so paid may be recovered or recouped  
19 by the employer or carrier. Such applications shall be  
20 considered and determined in accordance with s. 440.25.

21 (c) Notwithstanding s. 440.21(2), when a claimant is  
22 represented by counsel, the claimant may waive all rights to  
23 any and all benefits under this chapter by entering into a  
24 settlement agreement releasing the employer and the carrier  
25 from liability for workers' compensation benefits in exchange  
26 for a lump-sum payment to the claimant. The settlement  
27 agreement requires approval by the judge of compensation  
28 claims only as to the attorney's fees paid to the claimant's  
29 attorney by the claimant. The parties need not submit any  
30 information or documentation in support of the settlement,  
31 except as needed to justify the amount of the attorney's fees.

1 Neither the employer nor the carrier is responsible for any  
2 attorney's fees relating to the settlement and release of  
3 claims under this section. Payment of the lump-sum settlement  
4 amount must be made within 14 days after the date the judge of  
5 compensation claims mails the order approving the attorney's  
6 fees. Any order entered by a judge of compensation claims  
7 approving the attorney's fees as set out in the settlement  
8 under this subsection is not considered to be an award and is  
9 not subject to modification or review. The judge of  
10 compensation claims shall report these settlements to the  
11 Deputy Chief Judge in accordance with the requirements set  
12 forth in paragraphs (a) and (b). Settlements entered into  
13 under this subsection are valid and apply to all dates of  
14 accident.

15 (d) With respect to any lump-sum settlement under this  
16 subsection, a judge of compensation claims must consider  
17 whether the settlement provides for appropriate recovery of  
18 any child support arrearage.

19 (e)~~(c)~~ This section applies to all claims that the  
20 parties have not previously settled, regardless of the date of  
21 accident.

22 Section 17. Section 440.22, Florida Statutes, is  
23 amended to read:

24 440.22 Assignment and exemption from claims of  
25 creditors.--No assignment, release, or commutation of  
26 compensation or benefits due or payable under this chapter  
27 except as provided by this chapter shall be valid, and such  
28 compensation and benefits shall be exempt from all claims of  
29 creditors, and from levy, execution and attachments or other  
30 remedy for recovery or collection of a debt, which exemption  
31 may not be waived. However, the exemption of workers'

1 compensation claims from creditors does not extend to claims  
2 based on an award of child support or alimony.

3 Section 18. Subsections (1), (2), (3), and (4) and  
4 paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section 440.25, Florida  
5 Statutes, are amended to read:

6 440.25 Procedures for mediation and hearings.--

7 (1) Within 21 days after a petition for benefits is  
8 filed under s. 440.192, a mediation conference concerning such  
9 petition shall be held. Within 7 days after such petition is  
10 filed, the judge of compensation claims shall notify the  
11 interested parties that a mediation conference concerning such  
12 petition will be held. Such notice shall give the date, time,  
13 and location of the mediation conference. Such notice may be  
14 served personally upon the interested parties or may be sent  
15 to the interested parties by mail. The claimant or the  
16 adjuster of the employer or carrier may, at the mediator's  
17 discretion, attend the mediation conference by telephone or,  
18 if agreed to by the parties, other electronic means.

19 (2) Any party who participates in a mediation  
20 conference shall not be precluded from requesting a hearing  
21 following the mediation conference should both parties not  
22 agree to be bound by the results of the mediation conference.  
23 A mediation conference is required to be held unless this  
24 requirement is waived by the Deputy Chief Judge. No later than  
25 3 days prior to the mediation conference, all parties must  
26 submit any applicable motions, including, but not limited to,  
27 a motion to waive the mediation conference, to the judge of  
28 compensation claims.

29 (3) Such mediation conference shall be conducted  
30 informally and does not require the use of formal rules of  
31 evidence or procedure. Any information from the files,

1 reports, case summaries, mediator's notes, or other  
2 communications or materials, oral or written, relating to a  
3 mediation conference under this section obtained by any person  
4 performing mediation duties is privileged and confidential and  
5 may not be disclosed without the written consent of all  
6 parties to the conference. Any research or evaluation effort  
7 directed at assessing the mediation program activities or  
8 performance must protect the confidentiality of such  
9 information. Each party to a mediation conference has a  
10 privilege during and after the conference to refuse to  
11 disclose and to prevent another from disclosing communications  
12 made during the conference whether or not the contested issues  
13 are successfully resolved. This subsection and paragraphs  
14 (4)(a) and (b) shall not be construed to prevent or inhibit  
15 the discovery or admissibility of any information that is  
16 otherwise subject to discovery or that is admissible under  
17 applicable law or rule of procedure, except that any conduct  
18 or statements made during a mediation conference or in  
19 negotiations concerning the conference are inadmissible in any  
20 proceeding under this chapter. The Deputy Chief Judge shall  
21 select a mediator. The mediator shall be employed on a  
22 full-time basis by the Office of the Judges of Compensation  
23 Claims. A mediator must be a member of The Florida Bar for at  
24 least 5 years and must complete a mediation training program  
25 approved by the Deputy Chief Judge. Adjunct mediators may be  
26 employed by the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims on  
27 an as-needed basis and shall be selected from a list prepared  
28 by the Deputy Chief Judge. An adjunct mediator must be  
29 independent of all parties participating in the mediation  
30 conference. An adjunct mediator must be a member of The  
31 Florida Bar for at least 5 years and must complete a mediation

1 training program approved by the Deputy Chief Judge. An  
2 adjunct mediator shall have access to the office, equipment,  
3 and supplies of the judge of compensation claims in each  
4 district. In the event both parties agree, the results of the  
5 mediation conference shall be binding and neither party shall  
6 have a right to appeal the results. In the event either party  
7 refuses to agree to the results of the mediation conference,  
8 the results of the mediation conference as well as the  
9 testimony, witnesses, and evidence presented at the conference  
10 shall not be admissible at any subsequent proceeding on the  
11 claim. The mediator shall not be called in to testify or give  
12 deposition to resolve any claim for any hearing before the  
13 judge of compensation claims. The employer may be represented  
14 by an attorney at the mediation conference if the employee is  
15 also represented by an attorney at the mediation conference.

16 (4)(a) If, on the 10th day following commencement of  
17 mediation, the questions in dispute have not been resolved,  
18 the judge of compensation claims shall hold a pretrial  
19 hearing. The judge of compensation claims shall give the  
20 interested parties at least 7 days' advance notice of the  
21 pretrial hearing by mail. At the pretrial hearing, the judge  
22 of compensation claims shall, subject to paragraph (b), set a  
23 date for the final hearing that allows the parties at least 30  
24 days to conduct discovery unless the parties consent to an  
25 earlier hearing date.

26 (b) The final hearing must be held and concluded  
27 within 45 days after the pretrial hearing. Continuances may be  
28 granted only if the requesting party demonstrates to the judge  
29 of compensation claims that the reason for requesting the  
30 continuance arises from circumstances beyond the party's  
31 control. The written consent of the claimant must be obtained

1 before any request is granted for an additional continuance  
 2 after the initial continuance has been granted.

3 (c) The judge of compensation claims shall give the  
 4 interested parties at least 7 days' advance notice of the  
 5 final hearing, served upon the interested parties by mail.

6 (d) The hearing shall be held in the county where the  
 7 injury occurred, if the injury occurred in this state, unless  
 8 otherwise agreed to between the parties and authorized by the  
 9 judge of compensation claims in the county where the injury  
 10 occurred. If the injury occurred without the state and is one  
 11 for which compensation is payable under this chapter, then the  
 12 hearing above referred to may be held in the county of the  
 13 employer's residence or place of business, or in any other  
 14 county of the state which will, in the discretion of the  
 15 Deputy Chief Judge, be the most convenient for a hearing. The  
 16 hearing shall be conducted by a judge of compensation claims,  
 17 who shall, within 30 ~~14~~ days after final hearing or closure of  
 18 the hearing record, unless otherwise agreed by the parties,  
 19 enter a final order on the merits of the disputed issues  
 20 ~~determine the dispute in a summary manner. The judge of~~  
 21 compensation claims may enter an abbreviated final order in  
 22 cases in which compensability is not disputed. Either party  
 23 may request separate findings of fact and conclusions of law.

24 At such hearing, the claimant and employer may each present  
 25 evidence in respect of such claim and may be represented by  
 26 any attorney authorized in writing for such purpose. When  
 27 there is a conflict in the medical evidence submitted at the  
 28 hearing, the provisions of s. 440.13 shall apply. The report  
 29 or testimony of the expert medical advisor shall be made a  
 30 part of the record of the proceeding and shall be given the  
 31 same consideration by the judge of compensation claims as is



1 accorded other medical evidence submitted in the proceeding;  
2 and all costs incurred in connection with such examination and  
3 testimony may be assessed as costs in the proceeding, subject  
4 to the provisions of s. 440.13. No judge of compensation  
5 claims may make a finding of a degree of permanent impairment  
6 that is greater than the greatest permanent impairment rating  
7 given the claimant by any examining or treating physician,  
8 except upon stipulation of the parties.

9 (e) The order making an award or rejecting the claim,  
10 referred to in this chapter as a "compensation order," shall  
11 set forth the findings of ultimate facts and the mandate; and  
12 the order need not include any other reason or justification  
13 for such mandate. The compensation order shall be filed in the  
14 Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims ~~division~~ at  
15 Tallahassee. A copy of such compensation order shall be sent  
16 by mail to the parties and attorneys of record at the last  
17 known address of each, with the date of mailing noted thereon.

18 (f) Each judge of compensation claims is required to  
19 submit a special report to the Deputy Chief Judge in each  
20 contested workers' compensation case in which the case is not  
21 determined within 30 ~~14~~ days of final hearing or closure of  
22 the hearing record. Said form shall be provided by the  
23 director of the Division of Administrative Hearings ~~Chief~~  
24 ~~Judge~~ and shall contain the names of the judge of compensation  
25 claims and of the attorneys involved and a brief explanation  
26 by the judge of compensation claims as to the reason for such  
27 a delay in issuing a final order. ~~The Chief Judge shall~~  
28 ~~compile these special reports into an annual public report to~~  
29 ~~the Governor, the Secretary of Labor and Employment Security,~~  
30 ~~the Legislature, The Florida Bar, and the appellate district~~  
31 ~~judicial nominating commissions.~~

1           ~~(g) Judges of compensation claims shall adopt and~~  
2 ~~enforce uniform local rules for workers' compensation.~~

3           (g)(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of this  
4 section, the judge of compensation claims may require the  
5 appearance of the parties and counsel before her or him  
6 without written notice for an emergency conference where there  
7 is a bona fide emergency involving the health, safety, or  
8 welfare of an employee. An emergency conference under this  
9 section may result in the entry of an order or the rendering  
10 of an adjudication by the judge of compensation claims.

11           (h)(i) To expedite dispute resolution and to enhance  
12 the self-executing features of the Workers' Compensation Law,  
13 the Deputy Chief Judge shall make provision by rule or order  
14 for the resolution of appropriate motions by judges of  
15 compensation claims without oral hearing upon submission of  
16 brief written statements in support and opposition, and for  
17 expedited discovery and docketing.

18           (i)(j) To further expedite dispute resolution and to  
19 enhance the self-executing features of the system, those  
20 petitions filed in accordance with s. 440.192 that involve a  
21 claim for benefits of \$5,000 or less shall, in the absence of  
22 compelling evidence to the contrary, be presumed to be  
23 appropriate for expedited resolution under this paragraph; and  
24 any other claim filed in accordance with s. 440.192, upon the  
25 written agreement of both parties and application by either  
26 party, may similarly be resolved under this paragraph. For  
27 purposes of expedited resolution pursuant to this paragraph,  
28 the Deputy Chief Judge shall make provision by rule or order  
29 for expedited and limited discovery and expedited docketing in  
30 such cases. At least 15 days prior to hearing, the parties  
31 shall exchange and file with the judge of compensation claims

1 a pretrial outline of all issues, defenses, and witnesses on a  
2 form adopted ~~promulgated~~ by the Deputy Chief Judge; provided,  
3 in no event shall such hearing be held without 15 days'  
4 written notice to all parties. No pretrial hearing shall be  
5 held. The judge of compensation claims shall limit all  
6 argument and presentation of evidence at the hearing to a  
7 maximum of 30 minutes, and such hearings shall not exceed 30  
8 minutes in length. Neither party shall be required to be  
9 represented by counsel. The employer or carrier may be  
10 represented by an adjuster or other qualified representative.  
11 The employer or carrier and any witness may appear at such  
12 hearing by telephone. The rules of evidence shall be liberally  
13 construed in favor of allowing introduction of evidence.

14 (5)

15 (b) An appellant may be relieved of any necessary  
16 filing fee by filing a verified petition of indigency for  
17 approval as provided in s. 57.081(1) and may be relieved in  
18 whole or in part from the costs for preparation of the record  
19 on appeal if, within 15 days after the date notice of the  
20 estimated costs for the preparation is served, the appellant  
21 files with the judge of compensation claims a copy of the  
22 designation of the record on appeal, and a verified petition  
23 to be relieved of costs. A verified petition filed prior to  
24 the date of service of the notice of the estimated costs shall  
25 be deemed not timely filed. The verified petition relating to  
26 record costs shall contain a sworn statement that the  
27 appellant is insolvent and a complete, detailed, and sworn  
28 financial affidavit showing all the appellant's assets,  
29 liabilities, and income. Failure to state in the affidavit all  
30 assets and income, including marital assets and income, shall  
31 be grounds for denying the petition with prejudice. The Office

1 of the Judges of Compensation Claims division shall adopt  
2 ~~promulgate~~ rules as may be required pursuant to this  
3 subsection, including forms for use in all petitions brought  
4 under this subsection. The appellant's attorney, or the  
5 appellant if she or he is not represented by an attorney,  
6 shall include as a part of the verified petition relating to  
7 record costs an affidavit or affirmation that, in her or his  
8 opinion, the notice of appeal was filed in good faith and that  
9 there is a probable basis for the District Court of Appeal,  
10 First District, to find reversible error, and shall state with  
11 particularity the specific legal and factual grounds for the  
12 opinion. Failure to so affirm shall be grounds for denying the  
13 petition. A copy of the verified petition relating to record  
14 costs shall be served upon all interested parties, ~~including~~  
15 ~~the division and the Office of the General Counsel, Department~~  
16 ~~of Labor and Employment Security, in Tallahassee.~~ The judge of  
17 compensation claims shall promptly conduct a hearing on the  
18 verified petition relating to record costs, giving at least 15  
19 days' notice to the appellant, the division, and all other  
20 interested parties, all of whom shall be parties to the  
21 proceedings. The judge of compensation claims may enter an  
22 order without such hearing if no objection is filed by an  
23 interested party within 20 days from the service date of the  
24 verified petition relating to record costs. Such proceedings  
25 shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this  
26 section and with the workers' compensation rules of procedure,  
27 to the extent applicable. In the event an insolvency petition  
28 is granted, the judge of compensation claims shall direct the  
29 division to pay record costs and filing fees from the Workers'  
30 Compensation Trust Fund pending final disposition of the costs  
31 of appeal. The division may transcribe or arrange for the

1 transcription of the record in any proceeding for which it is  
2 ordered to pay the cost of the record. ~~In the event the~~  
3 ~~insolvency petition is denied, the judge of compensation~~  
4 ~~claims may enter an order requiring the petitioner to~~  
5 ~~reimburse the division for costs incurred in opposing the~~  
6 ~~petition, including investigation and travel expenses.~~

7 Section 19. Section 440.271, Florida Statutes, is  
8 amended to read:

9 440.271 Appeal of order of judge of compensation  
10 claims.--Review of any order of a judge of compensation claims  
11 entered pursuant to this chapter shall be by appeal to the  
12 District Court of Appeal, First District. To promote  
13 consistency and uniformity in the application of this chapter,  
14 the District Court of Appeal, First District, shall establish  
15 a specialized division to hear all appeals of orders of judges  
16 of compensation claims. The court may structure the division  
17 to hear workers' compensation cases exclusively or in addition  
18 to other appeals. Appeals shall be filed in accordance with  
19 rules of procedure prescribed by the Supreme Court for review  
20 of such orders. The division shall be given notice of any  
21 proceedings pertaining to s. 440.25, regarding indigency, or  
22 s. 440.49, regarding the Special Disability Trust Fund, and  
23 shall have the right to intervene in any proceedings.

24 Section 20. Subsection (2) of section 440.29, Florida  
25 Statutes, is amended to read:

26 440.29 Procedure before the judge of compensation  
27 claims.--

28 (2) Hearings before the judge of compensation claims  
29 shall be open to the public, and the Deputy Chief Judge is  
30 authorized to designate the manner in which particular types  
31 of hearings are recorded and reported and, when necessary, to

1 contract for the reporting of such hearings. The Deputy Chief  
2 Judge shall arrange for the preparation of a record of the  
3 hearings and other proceedings before judges of compensation  
4 claims, as necessary, and is authorized to allow for the  
5 attendance of court reporters at hearings, for preparation of  
6 transcripts of testimony, for copies of any instrument, and  
7 for other reporting or recording services. The Deputy Chief  
8 Judge may charge the same fees allowed by law or court rule to  
9 reporters, persons preparing transcripts, or clerks of courts  
10 of this state for like services.

11 Section 21. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
12 440.34, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

13 440.34 Attorney's fees; costs.--

14 (3) If the claimant should prevail in any proceedings  
15 before a judge of compensation claims or court, there shall be  
16 taxed against the employer the reasonable costs of such  
17 proceedings, not to include the attorney's fees of the  
18 claimant. A claimant shall be responsible for the payment of  
19 her or his own attorney's fees, except that a claimant shall  
20 be entitled to recover a reasonable attorney's fee from a  
21 carrier or employer:

22 (b) In any case in which the employer or carrier files  
23 a response to petition ~~notice of denial~~ with the Office of the  
24 Judges of Compensation Claims ~~division~~ and the injured person  
25 has employed an attorney in the successful prosecution of the  
26 claim; or

27  
28 In applying the factors set forth in subsection (1) to cases  
29 arising under paragraphs (a), (b), (c), and (d), the judge of  
30 compensation claims must only consider only such benefits and  
31 the time reasonably spent in obtaining them as were secured

1 for the claimant within the scope of paragraphs (a), (b), (c),  
2 and (d).

3 Section 22. Section 440.345, Florida Statutes, is  
4 amended to read:

5 440.345 Reporting of attorney's fees.--All fees paid  
6 to attorneys for services rendered under this chapter shall be  
7 reported to the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims  
8 ~~division~~ as the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims  
9 ~~division~~ requires by rule. The Office of the Judges of  
10 Compensation Claims division shall annually summarize such  
11 data in a report to the Workers' Compensation Oversight Board.

12 Section 23. Paragraphs (b), (c), and (f) of subsection  
13 (1) of section 440.38, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

14 440.38 Security for compensation; insurance carriers  
15 and self-insurers.--

16 (1) Every employer shall secure the payment of  
17 compensation under this chapter:

18 (b) By furnishing satisfactory proof to the division  
19 of its financial ability to pay such compensation individually  
20 and on behalf of its subsidiary and affiliated companies with  
21 employees in this state and receiving an authorization from  
22 the division to pay such compensation directly in accordance  
23 with the following provisions:

24 1. The division may, ~~as a condition to such~~  
25 ~~authorization, require an such~~ employer to deposit with in a  
26 ~~depository designated by the division a qualifying security~~  
27 deposit. The division shall determine the type and amount of  
28 the qualifying security deposit and shall either an indemnity  
29 ~~bond or securities, at the option of the employer, of a kind~~  
30 ~~and in an amount determined by the division and subject to~~  
31 ~~such conditions as the division may prescribe~~ conditions for

1 the qualifying security deposit, which shall include  
2 authorization ~~for~~ to the division to call the qualifying  
3 security deposit in the case of default ~~to sell any such~~  
4 ~~securities sufficient to pay compensation awards or to bring~~  
5 ~~suit upon such bonds, to procure prompt payment of~~  
6 ~~compensation under this chapter~~. In addition, the division  
7 shall require, as a condition to authorization to self-insure,  
8 proof that the employer has provided for competent personnel  
9 with whom to deliver benefits and to provide a safe working  
10 environment. Further, the division shall require such  
11 employer to carry reinsurance at levels that will ensure the  
12 actuarial soundness of such employer in accordance with rules  
13 promulgated by the division. The division may by rule require  
14 that, in the event of an individual self-insurer's insolvency,  
15 such qualifying security deposits ~~indemnity bonds, securities,~~  
16 and reinsurance policies are ~~shall be~~ payable to the Florida  
17 Self-Insurers Guaranty Association, Incorporated, created  
18 pursuant to s. 440.385. Any employer securing compensation in  
19 accordance with the provisions of this paragraph shall be  
20 known as a self-insurer and shall be classed as a carrier of  
21 her or his own insurance.

22         2. If the employer fails to maintain the foregoing  
23 requirements, the division shall revoke the employer's  
24 authority to self-insure, unless the employer provides to the  
25 division the certified opinion of an independent actuary who  
26 is a member of the American Society of Actuaries as to the  
27 actuarial present value of the employer's determined and  
28 estimated future compensation payments based on cash reserves,  
29 using a 4-percent discount rate, and a qualifying security  
30 deposit equal to 1.5 times the value so certified. The  
31 employer shall thereafter annually provide such a certified



1 opinion until such time as the employer meets the requirements  
2 of subparagraph 1. The qualifying security deposit shall be  
3 adjusted at the time of each such annual report. Upon the  
4 failure of the employer to timely provide such opinion or to  
5 timely provide a security deposit in an amount equal to 1.5  
6 times the value certified in the latest opinion, the division  
7 shall then revoke such employer's authorization to  
8 self-insure, and such failure shall be deemed to constitute an  
9 immediate serious danger to the public health, safety, or  
10 welfare sufficient to justify the summary suspension of the  
11 employer's authorization to self-insure pursuant to s. 120.68.

12 3. Upon the suspension or revocation of the employer's  
13 authorization to self-insure, the employer shall provide to  
14 the division and to the Florida Self-Insurers Guaranty  
15 Association, Incorporated, created pursuant to s. 440.385 the  
16 certified opinion of an independent actuary who is a member of  
17 the American Society of Actuaries of the actuarial present  
18 value of the determined and estimated future compensation  
19 payments of the employer for claims incurred while the member  
20 exercised the privilege of self-insurance, using a discount  
21 rate of 4 percent. The employer shall provide such an opinion  
22 at 6-month intervals thereafter until such time as the latest  
23 opinion shows no remaining value of claims. With each such  
24 opinion, the employer shall deposit with the division a  
25 qualifying security deposit in an amount equal to the value  
26 certified by the actuary. The association has a cause of  
27 action against an employer, and against any successor of the  
28 employer, who fails to timely provide such opinion or who  
29 fails to timely maintain the required security deposit with  
30 the division. The association shall recover a judgment in the  
31 amount of the actuarial present value of the determined and

1 estimated future compensation payments of the employer for  
2 claims incurred while the employer exercised the privilege of  
3 self-insurance, together with attorney's fees. For purposes  
4 of this section, the successor of an employer means any  
5 person, business entity, or group of persons or business  
6 entities, which holds or acquires legal or beneficial title to  
7 the majority of the assets or the majority of the shares of  
8 the employer.

9 4. A qualifying security deposit shall consist, at the  
10 option of the employer, of:

11 a. Surety bonds, in a form and containing such terms  
12 as prescribed by the division, issued by a corporation surety  
13 authorized to transact surety business by the Department of  
14 Insurance, and whose policyholders' and financial ratings, as  
15 reported in A.M. Best's Insurance Reports, Property-Liability,  
16 are not less than "A" and "V", respectively.

17 ~~b. Certificates of deposit with financial~~  
18 ~~institutions, the deposits of which are insured through the~~  
19 ~~Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the Federal Savings~~  
20 ~~and Loan Insurance Corporation.~~

21 ~~b.e.~~ Irrevocable letters of credit in favor of the  
22 division issued by financial institutions located within this  
23 state, the deposits of which are insured through the Federal  
24 Deposit Insurance Corporation ~~described in sub-subparagraph b.~~

25 ~~d. Direct obligations of the United States Treasury~~  
26 ~~backed by the full faith and credit of the United States.~~

27 ~~e. Securities issued by this state and backed by the~~  
28 ~~full faith and credit of this state.~~

29 5. The qualifying security deposit shall be held by  
30 the division, ~~or by a depository authorized by the division,~~  
31 exclusively for the benefit of workers' compensation

1 claimants. The security shall not be subject to assignment,  
2 execution, attachment, or any legal process whatsoever, except  
3 as necessary to guarantee the payment of compensation under  
4 this chapter. No surety bond may be terminated, and no letter  
5 of credit ~~other qualifying security~~ may be allowed to expire  
6 ~~lapse~~, without 90 days' prior notice to the division and  
7 deposit by the self-insuring employer of some other qualifying  
8 security deposit of equal value within 10 business days after  
9 such notice. Failure to provide such notice or failure to  
10 timely provide qualifying replacement security after such  
11 notice shall constitute grounds for the division to call or  
12 sue upon the surety bond, ~~or to act with respect to other~~  
13 ~~pledged security in any manner necessary to preserve its value~~  
14 ~~for the purposes intended by this section, including the~~  
15 ~~exercise its of rights under a letter of credit.~~ Current  
16 self-insured employers must comply with this section on or  
17 before December 31, 2001, or upon the maturity of existing  
18 security deposits, whichever occurs later, ~~the sale of any~~  
19 ~~security at then prevailing market rates, or the withdrawal of~~  
20 ~~any funds represented by any certificate of deposit forming~~  
21 ~~part of the qualifying security deposit.~~ The division may  
22 specify by rule the amount of the qualifying security deposit  
23 required prior to authorizing an employer to self-insure and  
24 the amount of net worth required for an employer to qualify  
25 for authorization to self-insure;

26 (c) By entering into a contract with a public utility  
27 under an approved utility-provided self-insurance program as  
28 set forth in s. 624.46225 ~~440.571~~ in effect as of July 1,  
29 1983. The division shall adopt rules to implement this  
30 paragraph;

31

1 (f) By entering into a contract with an individual  
2 self-insurer under an approved individual  
3 self-insurer-provided self-insurance program as set forth in  
4 s. 624.46225. The division may adopt rules to administer  
5 ~~implement~~ this subsection.

6 Section 24. Subsections (3), (5), (6), and (7) of  
7 section 440.44, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

8 440.44 Workers' compensation; staff organization.--

9 (3) EXPENDITURES.--The division and the director of  
10 the Division of Administrative Hearings ~~Chief Judge~~ shall make  
11 such expenditures, including expenditures for personal  
12 services and rent at the seat of government and elsewhere, for  
13 law books; for telephone services and WATS lines; for books of  
14 reference, periodicals, equipment, and supplies; and for  
15 printing and binding as may be necessary in the administration  
16 of this chapter. All expenditures in the administration of  
17 this chapter shall be allowed and paid as provided in s.  
18 440.50 upon the presentation of itemized vouchers therefor  
19 approved by the division or the director of the Division of  
20 Administrative Hearings ~~Chief Judge~~.

21 (5) OFFICE.--The division and the Deputy Chief Judge  
22 shall maintain and keep open during reasonable business hours  
23 an office, which shall be provided in the Capitol or some  
24 other suitable building in the City of Tallahassee, for the  
25 transaction of business under this chapter, at which office  
26 the official records and papers shall be kept. The office  
27 shall be furnished and equipped. The division, any judge of  
28 compensation claims, or the Deputy Chief Judge may hold  
29 sessions and conduct hearings at any place within the state.  
30 The Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims shall maintain  
31

1 the 17 district offices, 31 judges of compensation claims, and  
2 31 mediators as they exist on June 30, 2001.

3 (6) SEAL.--The division and, the judges of  
4 compensation claims, ~~and the Chief Judge~~ shall have a seal  
5 upon which shall be inscribed the words "State of Florida  
6 Department of Insurance Labor and Employment Security--Seal  
7 and "Division of Administrative Hearings--Seal,"  
8 respectively."

9 (7) DESTRUCTION OF OBSOLETE RECORDS.--The division is  
10 expressly authorized to provide by regulation for and to  
11 destroy obsolete records of the division ~~and commission~~. The  
12 Division of Administrative Hearings is expressly authorized to  
13 provide by regulation for and to destroy obsolete records of  
14 the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims.

15 Section 25. Section 440.442, Florida Statutes, is  
16 amended to read:

17 440.442 Code of Judicial Conduct.--The Deputy Chief  
18 Judge, and judges of compensation claims shall observe and  
19 abide by the Code of Judicial Conduct as adopted by the  
20 Florida Supreme Court ~~provided in this section~~. Any material  
21 violation of a provision of the Code of Judicial Conduct shall  
22 constitute either malfeasance or misfeasance in office and  
23 shall be grounds for suspension and removal of the Deputy ~~such~~  
24 Chief Judge, or judge of compensation claims by the Governor.

25 ~~(1) A JUDGE SHOULD UPHOLD THE INTEGRITY AND~~  
26 ~~INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY.--An independent and honorable~~  
27 ~~judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. A judge~~  
28 ~~should participate in establishing, maintaining, and~~  
29 ~~enforcing, and should himself or herself observe, high~~  
30 ~~standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of~~  
31

1 ~~the judiciary may be preserved. The provisions of this code~~  
2 ~~should be construed and applied to further that objective.~~

3 ~~(2) A JUDGE SHOULD AVOID IMPROPRIETY AND THE~~  
4 ~~APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY IN ALL HIS OR HER ACTIVITIES.--~~

5 ~~(a) A judge should respect and comply with the law and~~  
6 ~~should conduct himself or herself at all times in a manner~~  
7 ~~that promotes public confidence in the integrity and~~  
8 ~~impartiality of the judiciary.~~

9 ~~(b) A judge should not allow his or her personal~~  
10 ~~relationships to influence his or her judicial conduct of~~  
11 ~~judgment. A judge should not lend the prestige of the office~~  
12 ~~to advance the private interest of others; nor convey or~~  
13 ~~authorize others to convey the impression that they are in a~~  
14 ~~special position to influence him or her. A judge should not~~  
15 ~~testify voluntarily as a character witness.~~

16 ~~(3) A JUDGE SHOULD PERFORM THE DUTIES OF OFFICE~~  
17 ~~IMPARTIALLY AND DILIGENTLY.--The judicial duties of a judge~~  
18 ~~take precedence over all his or her other activities. The~~  
19 ~~judicial duties include all the duties of office prescribed by~~  
20 ~~law. In the performance of these duties, the following~~  
21 ~~standards with respect to adjudicative responsibilities apply:~~

22 ~~(a) A judge should be faithful to the law and maintain~~  
23 ~~professional competence in it. A judge should be unswayed by~~  
24 ~~partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.~~

25 ~~(b) A judge should maintain order and decorum in~~  
26 ~~proceedings.~~

27 ~~(c) A judge should be patient, dignified, and~~  
28 ~~courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others~~  
29 ~~with whom he or she must deal in an official capacity, and~~  
30 ~~should request similar conduct of lawyers, and of his or her~~

31

1 ~~staff, court officials, and others subject to his or her~~  
2 ~~direction and control.~~

3 ~~(4) A JUDGE MAY ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE~~  
4 ~~LAW, THE LEGAL SYSTEM, AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.--A~~  
5 ~~judge, subject to the proper performance of his or her~~  
6 ~~judicial duties, may engage in the following quasi-judicial~~  
7 ~~activities, if in doing so he or she does not cast doubt on~~  
8 ~~his or her capacity to decide impartially on any issue that~~  
9 ~~may come before him or her:~~

10 ~~(a) Speak, write, lecture, teach, and participate in~~  
11 ~~other activities concerning the law, the legal system, and the~~  
12 ~~administration of justice.~~

13 ~~(b) Appear at a public hearing before an executive or~~  
14 ~~legislative body or official on matters concerning the law,~~  
15 ~~the legal system, and the administration of justice, and may~~  
16 ~~otherwise consult with an executive or legislative body or~~  
17 ~~official, but only on matters concerning the administration of~~  
18 ~~justice.~~

19 ~~(c) Serve as a member, officer, or director of an~~  
20 ~~organization or governmental agency devoted to the improvement~~  
21 ~~of the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice~~  
22 ~~and assist such an organization in raising funds and may~~  
23 ~~participate in their management and investment, but should not~~  
24 ~~personally participate in public fundraising activities.~~

25 ~~(d) Make recommendations to public and private~~  
26 ~~fund-granting agencies on projects and programs concerning the~~  
27 ~~law, the legal system, and the administration of justice.~~

28 ~~(5) A JUDGE SHOULD REGULATE EXTRAJUDICIAL ACTIVITIES~~  
29 ~~TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CONFLICT WITH JUDICIAL DUTIES.--~~

30 ~~(a) Avocational activities.--A judge may write,~~  
31 ~~lecture, teach, and speak on nonlegal subjects, and engage in~~

1 ~~the arts, sports, or other social and recreational activities,~~  
2 ~~if such avocational activities do not detract from the dignity~~  
3 ~~of the office or interfere with the performance of judicial~~  
4 ~~duties.~~

5 ~~(b) Civil and charitable activities.-- A judge may not~~  
6 ~~participate in civic and charitable activities that reflect~~  
7 ~~adversely upon his or her impartiality or interfere with the~~  
8 ~~performance of his or her duties. A judge may serve as an~~  
9 ~~officer, director, trustee, or nonlegal advisory of an~~  
10 ~~educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic~~  
11 ~~organization not conducted for the economic or political~~  
12 ~~advantage of its members, subject to the following~~  
13 ~~limitations:~~

14 ~~1. A judge should not serve if it is likely that the~~  
15 ~~organization will be engaged in proceedings that would~~  
16 ~~ordinarily come before him or her or will be regularly engaged~~  
17 ~~in adversary proceedings in any court.~~

18 ~~2. A judge should not solicit funds for any~~  
19 ~~educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civil~~  
20 ~~organization, or use or permit the use of the prestige of the~~  
21 ~~office for that purpose, but may be listed as an officer,~~  
22 ~~director, or trustee of such an organization. A judge should~~  
23 ~~not be a speaker or a guest of honor at any organization's~~  
24 ~~fundraising events, but may attend such events.~~

25 ~~3. A judge should not give investment advice to such~~  
26 ~~an organization, but may serve on its board of directors or~~  
27 ~~trustees even though it has the responsibility for approving~~  
28 ~~investment decisions.~~

29 ~~(c) Financial activities.--~~

30 ~~1. A judge should refrain from financial and business~~  
31 ~~dealings that tend to reflect adversely on his or her~~



1 ~~impartiality, interfere with the proper performance of his or~~  
2 ~~her judicial duties, exploit his or her judicial position, or~~  
3 ~~involve the judge in frequent transactions with lawyers or~~  
4 ~~persons likely to come before the court on which he or she~~  
5 ~~serves.~~

6 ~~2. Subject to the requirements of subsection (1), a~~  
7 ~~judge in an individual or corporate capacity may hold and~~  
8 ~~manage investments, including real estate, and engage in other~~  
9 ~~remunerative activity, but should not serve as an officer,~~  
10 ~~director, manager, advisor, or employee of any business,~~  
11 ~~except a closely held family business that does not conflict~~  
12 ~~with subsection (1).~~

13 ~~3. A judge should manage his or her investments and~~  
14 ~~other financial interests to minimize the number of cases in~~  
15 ~~which he or she is disqualified. As soon as the judge can do~~  
16 ~~so without serious financial detriment, he or she should~~  
17 ~~divest himself or herself of investments and other financial~~  
18 ~~interests that might require frequent disqualifications.~~

19 ~~4. A judge should not accept a gift, bequest, favor,~~  
20 ~~or loan from anyone except as follows:~~

21 ~~a. A judge may accept a gift incident to a public~~  
22 ~~testimonial to him or her; books supplied by publishers on a~~  
23 ~~complimentary basis for official use; or an invitation to the~~  
24 ~~judge and spouse to attend a bar-related function or activity~~  
25 ~~devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system, or~~  
26 ~~the administration of justice;~~

27 ~~b. A judge may accept ordinary hospitality; a gift,~~  
28 ~~bequest, favor, or loan from a relative; a wedding or an~~  
29 ~~engagement gift; a loan from a lending institution in its~~  
30 ~~regular course of business on the same terms generally~~  
31 ~~available to persons who are not judges; or a scholarship or~~

1 ~~fellowship awarded on the same terms applied to other~~  
2 ~~applicants.~~

3 ~~c. A judge may accept any other gift, bequest, favor,~~  
4 ~~or loan exceeding \$100 only if the donor is not a party or~~  
5 ~~other person whose interests have recently come or may likely~~  
6 ~~come before him or her in the immediate future.~~

7 ~~5. A judge should make a reasonable effort to be~~  
8 ~~informed about the personal financial interests of members of~~  
9 ~~his or her family residing in the judge's household and shall~~  
10 ~~report any gift, bequest, favor, or loan received thereby of~~  
11 ~~which he or she has knowledge and which tends to reflect~~  
12 ~~adversely on his or her impartiality, in the same manner as he~~  
13 ~~or she reports compensation in subsection (6).~~

14 ~~6. For the purpose of this section, "member of his or~~  
15 ~~her family residing in the judge's household" means any~~  
16 ~~relative of a judge by blood or marriage, or a person treated~~  
17 ~~by a judge as a member of his or her family, who resides in~~  
18 ~~the judge's household.~~

19 ~~7. A judge is not required by this section to disclose~~  
20 ~~his or her income, debts, or investments, except as provided~~  
21 ~~in subsections (3) and (6).~~

22 ~~8. Information required by a judge in which his or her~~  
23 ~~judicial capacity should not be used or disclosed by the judge~~  
24 ~~in financial dealings or for any other purpose not related to~~  
25 ~~his or her judicial duties.~~

26 ~~(6) FISCAL MATTERS OF JUDGES.--Fiscal matters of a~~  
27 ~~judge should be conducted in a manner that will not give the~~  
28 ~~appearance of influence or impropriety. A judge should~~  
29 ~~regularly file public reports as required by s. 8, Art. II of~~  
30 ~~the State Constitution, and should publicly report gifts.~~

31

1           ~~(a) Compensation for quasi-judicial and extrajudicial~~  
2 ~~services and reimbursement of expenses.--A judge may receive~~  
3 ~~compensation and reimbursement of expenses for the~~  
4 ~~quasi-judicial and extrajudicial activities permitted by this~~  
5 ~~section, if the source of such payments does not give the~~  
6 ~~appearance of influencing the judge in his or her judicial~~  
7 ~~duties or otherwise give the impression of impropriety subject~~  
8 ~~to the following restrictions:~~

9           ~~1. Compensation: Compensation should not exceed a~~  
10 ~~reasonable amount nor should it exceed what a person who is~~  
11 ~~not a judge would receive for the same activity.~~

12           ~~2. Expense reimbursement: Expense reimbursement~~  
13 ~~should be limited to the actual cost of travel, food, and~~  
14 ~~lodging reasonably incurred by the judge and, where~~  
15 ~~appropriate to the occasion, to his or her spouse. Any payment~~  
16 ~~in excess of such an amount is compensation.~~

17           ~~(b) Public financial reporting.--~~

18           ~~1. Income and assets: A judge shall file such public~~  
19 ~~reports as may be required by law for all public officials to~~  
20 ~~comply fully with the provisions of s. 8, Art. II of the State~~  
21 ~~Constitution. The form for public financial disclosure shall~~  
22 ~~be that recommended or adopted by the Florida Commission on~~  
23 ~~Ethics for use by all public officials. The form shall be~~  
24 ~~filed in the office of the Commission on Ethics on the date~~  
25 ~~prescribed by law.~~

26           ~~2. Gifts: A judge shall file a public report of all~~  
27 ~~gifts which are required to be disclosed under Canons 5D(5)(h)~~  
28 ~~and 6B(2) of the Code of Judicial Conduct. The report of gifts~~  
29 ~~received in the preceding calendar year shall be filed in the~~  
30 ~~office of the Commission on Ethics on or before July 1 of each~~  
31 ~~year.~~

1           Section 26. Section 440.45, Florida Statutes, is  
2 amended to read:

3           440.45 Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims.--

4           (1)(a) There is ~~hereby~~ created the Office of the  
5 Judges of Compensation Claims within the Department of  
6 Management Services ~~Labor and Employment Security~~. The Office  
7 of the Judges of Compensation Claims shall be headed by the  
8 Deputy a Chief Judge of Compensation Claims. The Deputy Chief  
9 Judge shall report to the director of the Division of  
10 Administrative Hearings. The Deputy Chief Judge shall be  
11 appointed by the Governor for a term of 4 years from a list of  
12 three names submitted by the statewide nominating commission  
13 created under subsection (2). The Deputy Chief Judge must  
14 demonstrate prior administrative experience and possess the  
15 same qualifications for appointment as a judge of compensation  
16 claims, and the procedure for reappointment of the Deputy  
17 Chief Judge will be the same as for reappointment of a judge  
18 of compensation claims. The office shall be a separate budget  
19 entity and the director of the Division of Administrative  
20 Hearings ~~Chief Judge~~ shall be its agency head for all  
21 purposes. The Department of Management Services ~~Labor and~~  
22 ~~Employment Security~~ shall provide administrative support and  
23 service to the office to the extent requested by the director  
24 of the Division of Administrative Hearings ~~Chief Judge~~ but  
25 shall not direct, supervise, or control the Office of the  
26 Judges of Compensation Claims in any manner, including, but  
27 not limited to, personnel, purchasing, budgetary matters, or  
28 property transactions. The operating budget of the Office of  
29 the Judges of Compensation Claims shall be paid out of the  
30 Workers' Compensation Administration Trust Fund established in  
31 s. 440.50.

1           (b) The current term of the Chief Judge of  
2 Compensation Claims shall expire October 1, 2001. Effective  
3 October 1, 2001, the position of Deputy Chief Judge of  
4 Compensation Claims is created.

5           (2)(a) The Governor shall appoint full-time judges of  
6 compensation claims to conduct proceedings as required by this  
7 chapter or other law. No person may be nominated to serve as a  
8 judge of compensation claims unless he or she has been a  
9 member of The Florida Bar in good standing for the previous 5  
10 years and is experienced ~~knowledgeable~~ in the practice of law  
11 of workers' compensation. No judge of compensation claims  
12 shall engage in the private practice of law during a term of  
13 office.

14           (b) Except as provided in paragraph (c), the Governor  
15 shall appoint a judge of compensation claims from a list of  
16 three persons nominated by a statewide nominating commission.  
17 The statewide nominating commission shall be composed of the  
18 following:

19           1. Five members, at least one of whom must be a member  
20 of a minority group as defined in s. 288.703(3), one of each  
21 who resides in each of the territorial jurisdictions of the  
22 district courts of appeal, appointed by the Board of Governors  
23 of The Florida Bar from among The Florida Bar members who are  
24 engaged in the practice of law. On July 1, 1999, the term of  
25 office of each person appointed by the Board of Governors of  
26 The Florida Bar to the commission expires. The Board of  
27 Governors shall appoint members who reside in the odd-numbered  
28 district court of appeal jurisdictions to 4-year terms each,  
29 beginning July 1, 1999, and members who reside in the  
30 even-numbered district court of appeal jurisdictions to 2-year  
31

1 terms each, beginning July 1, 1999. Thereafter, each member  
2 shall be appointed for a 4-year term;

3 2. Five electors, at least one of whom must be a  
4 member of a minority group as defined in s. 288.703(3), one of  
5 each who resides in each of the territorial jurisdictions of  
6 the district courts of appeal, appointed by the Governor. On  
7 July 1, 1999, the term of office of each person appointed by  
8 the Governor to the commission expires. The Governor shall  
9 appoint members who reside in the odd-numbered district court  
10 of appeal jurisdictions to 2-year terms each, beginning July  
11 1, 1999, and members who reside in the even-numbered district  
12 court of appeal jurisdictions to 4-year terms each, beginning  
13 July 1, 1999. Thereafter, each member shall be appointed for a  
14 4-year term; and

15 3. Five electors, at least one of whom must be a  
16 member of a minority group as defined in s. 288.703(3), one of  
17 each who resides in the territorial jurisdictions of the  
18 district courts of appeal, selected and appointed by a  
19 majority vote of the other 10 members of the commission. On  
20 October 1, 1999, the term of office of each person appointed  
21 to the commission by its other members expires. A majority of  
22 the other members of the commission shall appoint members who  
23 reside in the odd-numbered district court of appeal  
24 jurisdictions to 2-year terms each, beginning October 1, 1999,  
25 and members who reside in the even-numbered district court of  
26 appeal jurisdictions to 4-year terms each, beginning October  
27 1, 1999. Thereafter, each member shall be appointed for a  
28 4-year term.

29  
30 A vacancy occurring on the commission shall be filled by the  
31 original appointing authority for the unexpired balance of the

1 term. No attorney who appears before any judge of compensation  
2 claims more than four times a year is eligible to serve on the  
3 statewide nominating commission. The meetings and  
4 determinations of the nominating commission as to the judges  
5 of compensation claims shall be open to the public.

6 (c) Each judge of compensation claims shall be  
7 appointed for a term of 4 years, but during the term of office  
8 may be removed by the Governor for cause. Prior to the  
9 expiration of a judge's term of office, the statewide  
10 nominating commission shall review the judge's conduct and  
11 determine whether the judge's performance is satisfactory.  
12 Effective July 1, 2002, in determining whether a judge's  
13 performance is satisfactory, the commission shall consider the  
14 extent to which the judge has met the requirements of this  
15 chapter, including, but not limited to, the requirements of  
16 ss. 440.192(2), 440.25(1) and (4)(a)-(f), 440.34(2), and  
17 440.442.If the judge's performance is deemed satisfactory,  
18 the commission shall report its finding to the Governor no  
19 later than 6 months prior to the expiration of the judge's  
20 term of office. The Governor shall review the commission's  
21 report and may reappoint the judge for an additional 4-year  
22 term. If the Governor does not reappoint the judge, the  
23 Governor shall inform the commission. The judge shall remain  
24 in office until the Governor has appointed a successor judge  
25 in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b). If a vacancy occurs  
26 during a judge's unexpired term, the statewide nominating  
27 commission does not find the judge's performance is  
28 satisfactory, or the Governor does not reappoint the judge,  
29 the Governor shall appoint a successor judge for a term of 4  
30 years in accordance with paragraph (b).

31

1           (d) The Governor may appoint any attorney who has at  
2 least 5 years of experience in the practice of law in this  
3 state to serve as a judge of compensation claims pro hac vice  
4 in the absence or disqualification of any full-time judge of  
5 compensation claims or to serve temporarily as an additional  
6 judge of compensation claims in any area of the state in which  
7 the Governor determines that a need exists for such an  
8 additional judge. However, an attorney who is so appointed by  
9 the Governor may not serve for a period of more than 120  
10 successive days.

11           (e) The director of the Division of Administrative  
12 Hearings may receive or initiate complaints, conduct  
13 investigations, and dismiss complaints against the Deputy  
14 Chief Judge and the judges of compensation claims. The  
15 director may recommend to the Governor the removal of the  
16 Deputy Chief Judge or a judge of compensation claims or  
17 recommend the discipline of a judge whose conduct during his  
18 or her term of office warrants such discipline. For purposes  
19 of this section, the term "discipline" includes reprimand,  
20 fine, and suspension with or without pay. At the conclusion of  
21 each investigation, the director shall submit preliminary  
22 findings of fact and recommendations to the judge of  
23 compensation claims who is the subject of the complaint. The  
24 judge of compensation claims has 20 days within which to  
25 respond to the preliminary findings. The response and the  
26 director's rebuttal to the response must be included in the  
27 final report submitted to the Governor.

28           ~~(3) The Chief Judge shall select from among the full~~  
29 ~~time judges of the office two or more judges to rotate as~~  
30 ~~docketing judges. Docketing judges shall review all claims for~~  
31 ~~benefits for consistency with the requirements of this chapter~~



1 ~~and the rules of procedure, including, but not limited to,~~  
2 ~~specificity requirements, and shall dismiss any claim that~~  
3 ~~fails to comport with such rules and requirements. The~~  
4 ~~docketing judge shall not dismiss any claim with prejudice~~  
5 ~~without offering the parties an opportunity to appear and~~  
6 ~~present argument. The Chief Judge may as he or she deems~~  
7 ~~appropriate expand the duties of the docketing judges to~~  
8 ~~include resolution without hearing of other types of~~  
9 ~~procedural and substantive matters, including resolution of~~  
10 ~~fee disputes.~~

11 ~~(3)(4) The Chief Judge shall have the discretion to~~  
12 ~~require mediation and to designate qualified persons to act as~~  
13 ~~mediators in any dispute pending before the judges of~~  
14 ~~compensation claims and the division. The Deputy Chief Judge~~  
15 ~~shall coordinate with the Director of the Division of Workers'~~  
16 ~~Compensation to establish a mandatory mediation program to~~  
17 ~~facilitate early and efficient resolution of disputes arising~~  
18 ~~under this chapter and to establish training and continuing~~  
19 ~~education for new and sitting judges.~~

20 ~~(4)(5) The Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims~~  
21 ~~shall adopt ~~promulgate~~ rules to effect the purposes of this~~  
22 ~~section. Such rules shall include procedural rules applicable~~  
23 ~~to workers' compensation claim resolution and uniform criteria~~  
24 ~~for measuring the performance of the office, including, but~~  
25 ~~not limited to, the number of cases assigned and disposed, the~~  
26 ~~age of pending and disposed cases, timeliness of~~  
27 ~~decisionmaking, extraordinary fee awards, and other data~~  
28 ~~necessary for the judicial nominating commission to review the~~  
29 ~~performance of judges as required in paragraph (2)(c)~~  
30 ~~performance indicators. The workers' compensation rules of~~  
31 ~~procedure approved by the Supreme Court shall apply until the~~

1 rules adopted ~~promulgated~~ by the Office of the Judges of  
 2 Compensation Claims pursuant to this section become effective.  
 3 (5)(6) Not later than December 1 of each year, the  
 4 Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims ~~and the Division~~  
 5 ~~of Workers' Compensation~~ shall jointly issue a written report  
 6 to the Governor, the House of Representatives, ~~and~~ the Senate,  
 7 The Florida Bar, and the statewide nominating commission  
 8 summarizing the amount, cost, and outcome of all litigation  
 9 resolved in the previous fiscal ~~prior~~ year, summarizing the  
 10 disposition of mediation conferences, the number of mediation  
 11 conferences held, the number of continuances granted for  
 12 mediations and final hearings, the number and outcome of  
 13 litigated cases, the amount of attorney's fees paid in each  
 14 case according to order year and accident year, and the number  
 15 of final orders not issued within 30 days after the final  
 16 hearing or closure of the hearing record,~~applications and~~  
 17 ~~motions for mediation conferences~~ and recommending changes or  
 18 improvements to the dispute resolution elements of the  
 19 Workers' Compensation Law and regulations. If the Deputy Chief  
 20 Judge finds that judges generally are unable to meet a  
 21 particular statutory requirement for reasons beyond their  
 22 control, the Deputy Chief Judge shall submit such findings and  
 23 any recommendations to the Legislature.

24 Section 27. Section 440.47, Florida Statutes, is  
 25 amended to read:

26 440.47 Travel expenses.--The Deputy Chief Judge,  
 27 judges of compensation claims, and employees of the department  
 28 shall be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in s.  
 29 112.061. Such expenses shall be sworn to by the person who  
 30 incurred the same and shall be allowed and paid as provided in  
 31 s. 440.50 upon the presentation of vouchers therefor approved

1 by the director of the Division of Administrative Hearings  
2 ~~Chief Judge~~ or the department, whichever is applicable.

3 Section 28. Section 440.59, Florida Statutes, is  
4 amended to read:

5 440.59 Reporting requirements.--

6 (1) The department ~~of Labor and Employment Security~~  
7 shall annually prepare a report of the administration of this  
8 chapter for the preceding calendar year, including a detailed  
9 statement of the receipts of and expenditures from the fund  
10 established in s. 440.50 and a statement of the causes of the  
11 accidents leading to the injuries for which the awards were  
12 made, together with such recommendations as the department  
13 considers advisable. On or before September 15 of each year,  
14 the department shall submit a copy of the report to the  
15 Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the  
16 House of Representatives, the Democratic and Republican  
17 Leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and  
18 the chairs of the legislative committees having jurisdiction  
19 over workers' compensation.

20 (2) ~~The Division of Workers' Compensation of the~~  
21 ~~Department of Labor and Employment Security shall complete on~~  
22 ~~a quarterly basis an analysis of the previous quarter's~~  
23 ~~injuries which resulted in workers' compensation claims. The~~  
24 ~~analysis shall be broken down by risk classification, shall~~  
25 ~~show for each such risk classification the frequency and~~  
26 ~~severity for the various types of injury, and shall include an~~  
27 ~~analysis of the causes of such injuries. The division shall~~  
28 ~~distribute to each employer and self-insurer in the state~~  
29 ~~covered by the Workers' Compensation Law the data relevant to~~  
30 ~~its workforce. The report shall also be distributed to the~~

31

1 ~~insurers authorized to write workers' compensation insurance~~  
2 ~~in the state.~~

3       (2)~~(3)~~ The division shall annually prepare a closed  
4 claim report for all claims for which the employee lost more  
5 than 7 days from work and shall submit a copy of the report to  
6 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the  
7 House of Representatives, the Democratic and Republican  
8 Leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and  
9 the chairs of the legislative committees having jurisdiction  
10 over workers' compensation on or before September 15 of each  
11 year. The closed claim report shall include, but not be  
12 limited to, an analysis of all claims closed during the  
13 preceding year as to the date of accident, age of the injured  
14 employee, occupation of the injured employee, type of injury,  
15 body part affected, type and duration of indemnity benefits  
16 paid, permanent impairment rating, medical benefits identified  
17 by type of health care provider, and type and cost of any  
18 rehabilitation benefits provided.

19       (3)~~(4)~~ The division shall prepare an annual report for  
20 all claims for which the employee lost more than 7 days from  
21 work and shall submit a copy of the report to the Governor,  
22 the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of  
23 Representatives, the Democratic and Republican Leaders of the  
24 Senate and the House of Representatives, and the chairs of the  
25 legislative committees having jurisdiction over workers'  
26 compensation, on or before September 15 of each year. The  
27 annual report shall include a status report on all cases  
28 involving work-related injuries in the previous 10 years. The  
29 annual report shall include, but not be limited to, the number  
30 of open and closed cases, the number of cases receiving  
31 various types of benefits, and the cash and medical benefits

1 paid between the date of injury and the evaluation date, ~~the~~  
2 ~~number of litigated cases, and the amount of attorney's fees~~  
3 ~~paid in each case.~~

4 ~~(5) The Chief Judge must prepare an annual report~~  
5 ~~summarizing the disposition of mediation conferences and must~~  
6 ~~submit the report to the Governor, the President of the~~  
7 ~~Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the~~  
8 ~~Democratic and Republican Leaders of the Senate and the House~~  
9 ~~of Representatives, and the chairs of the legislative~~  
10 ~~committees having jurisdiction over workers' compensation, on~~  
11 ~~or before September 15 of each year.~~

12 Section 29. Section 440.593, Florida Statutes, is  
13 amended to read:

14 440.593 Electronic reporting.--

15 (1) The division may establish by rule an electronic  
16 reporting system requiring or authorizing whereby an employer  
17 or carrier is required to submit required forms, reports, or  
18 other information electronically rather than by other means  
19 filing otherwise required forms or reports. The division may  
20 by rule establish different deadlines for submitting forms,  
21 reports, or reporting information to the division, or to its  
22 authorized agent, via the electronic reporting system than are  
23 otherwise required when reporting information by other means.

24 (2) The division may require any carrier to submit  
25 data electronically, either directly or through a third-party  
26 vendor, and may require any carrier or vendor submitting data  
27 to the division electronically to be certified by the  
28 division. The division may specify performance requirements  
29 for any carrier or vendor submitting data electronically.

30 (3) The division may revoke the certification of any  
31 carrier or vendor determined by the division to be in

1 noncompliance with performance standards prescribed by rule  
2 for electronic submissions.

3 (4) The division may assess a civil penalty, not to  
4 exceed \$500 for each violation, as prescribed by rule.

5 (5) The division is authorized to adopt rules to  
6 administer this section.

7 Section 30. Section 489.114, Florida Statutes, is  
8 amended to read:

9 489.114 Evidence of workers' compensation  
10 coverage.--Except as provided in s. 489.115(5)(d),any person,  
11 business organization, or qualifying agent engaged in the  
12 business of contracting in this state and certified or  
13 registered under this part shall, as a condition precedent to  
14 the issuance or renewal of a certificate, registration, or  
15 certificate of authority of the contractor, provide to the  
16 Construction Industry Licensing Board, as provided by board  
17 rule, evidence of workers' compensation coverage pursuant to  
18 chapter 440. In the event that the Division of Workers'  
19 Compensation of the Department of Labor and Employment  
20 Security receives notice of the cancellation of a policy of  
21 workers' compensation insurance insuring a person or entity  
22 governed by this section, the Division of Workers'  
23 Compensation shall certify and identify all persons or  
24 entities by certification or registration license number to  
25 the department after verification is made by the Division of  
26 Workers' Compensation that such cancellation has occurred or  
27 that persons or entities governed by this section are no  
28 longer covered by workers' compensation insurance. Such  
29 certification and verification by the Division of Workers'  
30 Compensation shall result solely from records furnished to the  
31 Division of Workers' Compensation by the persons or entities

1 governed by this section. The department shall notify the  
2 persons or entities governed by this section who have been  
3 determined to be in noncompliance with chapter 440, and the  
4 persons or entities notified shall provide certification of  
5 compliance with chapter 440 to the department and pay an  
6 administrative fine as provided by rule. The failure to  
7 maintain workers' compensation coverage as required by law  
8 shall be grounds for the board to revoke, suspend, or deny the  
9 issuance or renewal of a certificate, registration, or  
10 certificate of authority of the contractor under the  
11 provisions of s. 489.129.

12 Section 31. Paragraph (d) is added to subsection (5)  
13 of section 489.115, Florida Statutes, to read:

14 489.115 Certification and registration; endorsement;  
15 reciprocity; renewals; continuing education.--

16 (5)

17 (d) An applicant for initial issuance of a certificate  
18 or registration shall submit as a prerequisite to qualifying  
19 for an exemption from workers' compensation coverage  
20 requirements under s. 440.05 an affidavit attesting to the  
21 fact that the applicant will obtain an exemption within 30  
22 days after the date the initial certificate or registration is  
23 issued by the board.

24 Section 32. Section 489.510, Florida Statutes, is  
25 amended to read:

26 489.510 Evidence of workers' compensation  
27 coverage.--Except as provided in s. 489.515(3)(b),any person,  
28 business organization, or qualifying agent engaged in the  
29 business of contracting in this state and certified or  
30 registered under this part shall, as a condition precedent to  
31 the issuance or renewal of a certificate or registration of

1 the contractor, provide to the Electrical Contractors'  
2 Licensing Board, as provided by board rule, evidence of  
3 workers' compensation coverage pursuant to chapter 440. In  
4 the event that the Division of Workers' Compensation of the  
5 Department of Labor and Employment Security receives notice of  
6 the cancellation of a policy of workers' compensation  
7 insurance insuring a person or entity governed by this  
8 section, the Division of Workers' Compensation shall certify  
9 and identify all persons or entities by certification or  
10 registration license number to the department after  
11 verification is made by the Division of Workers' Compensation  
12 that such cancellation has occurred or that persons or  
13 entities governed by this section are no longer covered by  
14 workers' compensation insurance. Such certification and  
15 verification by the Division of Workers' Compensation shall  
16 result solely from records furnished to the Division of  
17 Workers' Compensation by the persons or entities governed by  
18 this section. The department shall notify the persons or  
19 entities governed by this section who have been determined to  
20 be in noncompliance with chapter 440, and the persons or  
21 entities notified shall provide certification of compliance  
22 with chapter 440 to the department and pay an administrative  
23 fine as provided by rule. The failure to maintain workers'  
24 compensation coverage as required by law shall be grounds for  
25 the board to revoke, suspend, or deny the issuance or renewal  
26 of a certificate or registration of the contractor under the  
27 provisions of s. 489.533.

28 Section 33. Subsection (3) of section 489.515, Florida  
29 Statutes, is amended to read:

30 489.515 Issuance of certificates; registrations.--  
31



1           (3)(a) As a prerequisite to the initial issuance or  
2 the renewal of a certificate or registration, the applicant  
3 shall submit an affidavit on a form provided by the board  
4 attesting to the fact that the applicant has obtained both  
5 workers' compensation insurance or an acceptable exemption  
6 certificate issued by the department and public liability and  
7 property damage insurance for the health, safety, and welfare  
8 of the public in amounts determined by rule of the board. The  
9 board shall by rule establish a procedure to verify the  
10 accuracy of such affidavits based upon a random audit method.

11           (b) An applicant for initial issuance of a certificate  
12 or registration shall submit as a prerequisite to qualifying  
13 for an exemption from workers' compensation coverage  
14 requirements under s. 440.05 an affidavit attesting to the  
15 fact that the applicant will obtain an exemption within 30  
16 days after the date the initial certificate or registration is  
17 issued by the board.

18           Section 34. Section 627.0915, Florida Statutes, is  
19 amended to read:

20           627.0915 Rate filings; workers' compensation,  
21 drug-free workplace, and safe employers.--The Department of  
22 Insurance shall approve rating plans for workers' compensation  
23 insurance that give specific identifiable consideration in the  
24 setting of rates to employers that either implement a  
25 drug-free workplace program pursuant to rules adopted by the  
26 Division of Workers' Compensation of the Department of Labor  
27 and Employment Security or implement a safety program pursuant  
28 to provisions of the rating plan approved by the Division of  
29 ~~Safety pursuant to rules adopted by the Division of Safety of~~  
30 ~~the Department of Labor and Employment Security~~ or implement  
31 both a drug-free workplace program and a safety program. ~~The~~

1 ~~Division of Safety may by rule require that the client of a~~  
2 ~~help supply services company comply with the essential~~  
3 ~~requirements of a workplace safety program as a condition for~~  
4 ~~receiving a premium credit. The plans must take effect January~~  
5 ~~1, 1994, must~~ be actuarially sound, and must state the savings  
6 anticipated to result from such drug-testing and safety  
7 programs.

8 Section 35. Paragraph (p) of subsection (4) of section  
9 627.311, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

10 627.311 Joint underwriters and joint reinsurers.--

11 (4)

12 (p) Neither the plan nor any member of the board of  
13 governors is liable for monetary damages to any person for any  
14 statement, vote, decision, or failure to act, regarding the  
15 management or policies of the plan, unless:

16 1. The member breached or failed to perform her or his  
17 duties as a member; and

18 2. The member's breach of, or failure to perform,  
19 duties constitutes:

20 a. A violation of the criminal law, unless the member  
21 had reasonable cause to believe her or his conduct was not  
22 unlawful. A judgment or other final adjudication against a  
23 member in any criminal proceeding for violation of the  
24 criminal law estops that member from contesting the fact that  
25 her or his breach, or failure to perform, constitutes a  
26 violation of the criminal law; but does not estop the member  
27 from establishing that she or he had reasonable cause to  
28 believe that her or his conduct was lawful or had no  
29 reasonable cause to believe that her or his conduct was  
30 unlawful;

31

1           b. A transaction from which the member derived an  
2 improper personal benefit, either directly or indirectly; or

3           c. Recklessness or any act or omission that was  
4 committed in bad faith or with malicious purpose or in a  
5 manner exhibiting wanton and willful disregard of human  
6 rights, safety, or property. For purposes of this  
7 sub-subparagraph, the term "recklessness" means the acting, or  
8 omission to act, in conscious disregard of a risk:

9           (I) Known, or so obvious that it should have been  
10 known, to the member; and

11           (II) Known to the member, or so obvious that it should  
12 have been known, to be so great as to make it highly probable  
13 that harm would follow from such act or omission.

14           Section 36. Effective July 1, 2001, section 627.914,  
15 Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

16           627.914 Reports of information by workers'  
17 compensation insurers required.--

18           (1) The department shall adopt ~~promulgate~~ rules and  
19 statistical plans that must ~~which shall~~ thereafter be used by  
20 each insurer and self-insurance fund as defined in s. 624.461  
21 in the recording and reporting of loss, expense, and claims  
22 experience, in order that the experience of all insurers and  
23 self-insurance funds ~~self-insurers~~ may be made available at  
24 least annually in such form and detail as may be necessary to  
25 aid the department in determining whether Florida experience  
26 for workers' compensation insurance is sufficient for  
27 establishing rates.

28           ~~(2) Any insurer authorized to write a policy of~~  
29 ~~workers' compensation insurance shall transmit the following~~  
30 ~~information to the department each year with its annual~~  
31 ~~report, and such information shall be reported on a net basis~~

1 ~~with respect to reinsurance for nationwide experience and on a~~  
2 ~~direct basis for Florida experience:~~  
3       ~~(a) Premiums written;~~  
4       ~~(b) Premiums earned;~~  
5       ~~(c) Dividends paid or credited to policyholders;~~  
6       ~~(d) Losses paid;~~  
7       ~~(e) Allocated loss adjustment expenses;~~  
8       ~~(f) The ratio of allocated loss adjustment expenses to~~  
9 ~~losses paid;~~  
10       ~~(g) Unallocated loss adjustment expenses;~~  
11       ~~(h) The ratio of unallocated loss adjustment expenses~~  
12 ~~to losses paid;~~  
13       ~~(i) The total of losses paid and unallocated and~~  
14 ~~allocated loss adjustment expenses;~~  
15       ~~(j) The ratio of losses paid and unallocated and~~  
16 ~~allocated loss adjustment expenses to premiums earned;~~  
17       ~~(k) The number of claims outstanding as of December 31~~  
18 ~~of each year;~~  
19       ~~(l) The total amount of losses unpaid as of December~~  
20 ~~31 of each year;~~  
21       ~~(m) The total amount of allocated and unallocated loss~~  
22 ~~adjustment expenses unpaid as of December 31 of each year; and~~  
23       ~~(n) The total of losses paid and allocated loss~~  
24 ~~adjustment expenses and unallocated loss adjustment expenses,~~  
25 ~~plus the total of losses unpaid as of December 31 of each year~~  
26 ~~and loss adjustment expenses unpaid as of December 31 of each~~  
27 ~~year.~~  
28       ~~(3) A report of the information required in subsection~~  
29 ~~(2) shall be filed no later than April 1 of each year and~~  
30 ~~shall include the information for the preceding year ending~~  
31 ~~December 31. All reports shall be on a calendar accident year~~

1 ~~basis, and each calendar-accident year shall be reported at~~  
2 ~~eight stages of development.~~

3 (2)(4) Each insurer and self-insurance fund authorized  
4 to write a policy of workers' compensation insurance shall  
5 transmit the following information ~~for paragraphs (a), (b),~~  
6 ~~(d), and (e)~~ annually on both Florida experience and  
7 nationwide experience separately:

- 8 (a) Payrolls by classification.  
9 (b) Manual premiums by classification.  
10 (c) Standard premiums by classification.  
11 (d) Losses by classification and injury type.  
12 (e) Expenses.

13  
14 A report of this information shall be filed no later than July  
15 ~~April~~ 1 of each year. All reports shall be filed in  
16 accordance with standard reporting procedures for insurers,  
17 which procedures have received approval by the department, and  
18 shall contain data for the most recent policy period  
19 available. A statistical or rating organization may be used  
20 by insurers and self-insurance funds to report the data  
21 required by this section. The statistical or rating  
22 organization shall report each data element in the aggregate  
23 only for insurers and self-insurance funds required to report  
24 under this section who elect to have the ~~rating~~ organization  
25 report on their behalf. Such insurers and self-insurance funds  
26 shall be named in the report.

27 (3)(5) Individual self-insurers as defined ~~authorized~~  
28 ~~to transact workers' compensation insurance as provided in s.~~  
29 440.02 shall report only Florida data as prescribed in  
30 paragraphs (a)-(e) of subsection (2)(4) to the Division of  
31

1 Workers' Compensation of the Department of Labor and  
2 Employment Security.

3 (a) The Division of Workers' Compensation shall  
4 publish the dates and forms necessary to enable individual  
5 self-insurers to comply with this section.

6 ~~(b) The Division of Workers' Compensation shall report~~  
7 ~~the information collected under this section to the Department~~  
8 ~~of Insurance in a manner prescribed by the department.~~

9 ~~(b)(c)~~ A statistical or rating organization may be  
10 used by individual self-insurers for the purposes of reporting  
11 the data required by this section and calculating experience  
12 ratings.

13 ~~(4)(6)~~ The department shall provide a summary of  
14 information provided pursuant to subsection ~~subsections~~ (2)  
15 and ~~(4)~~ in its annual report.

16 Section 37. (1) The Office of the Judges of  
17 Compensation Claims is transferred by a type two transfer, as  
18 defined in s. 20.06(2), Florida Statutes, from the Department  
19 of Labor and Employment Security to the Division of  
20 Administrative Hearings of the Department of Management  
21 Services.

22 (2) Four positions within the Division of Workers'  
23 Compensation of the Department of Labor and Employment  
24 Security responsible for coding or entering data contained  
25 within final orders issued by the judges of compensation  
26 claims are transferred by a type two transfer, as defined in  
27 s. 20.06(2), Florida Statutes, to the Office of the Judges of  
28 Compensation Claims within the Division of Administrative  
29 Hearings of the Department of Management Services.

30 (3) Ten positions within the Division of Workers'  
31 Compensation of the Department of Labor and Employment

1 Security responsible for receiving and preparing docketing  
2 orders for the petitions for benefits and for receiving and  
3 entering data related to the petitions for benefits are  
4 transferred by a type two transfer, as defined in s. 20.06(2),  
5 Florida Statutes, to the Office of the Judges of Compensation  
6 Claims within the Division of Administrative Hearings of the  
7 Department of Management Services.

8 (4) Four positions within the Division of Workers'  
9 Compensation of the Department of Labor and Employment  
10 Security responsible for financial management, accounting, and  
11 budgeting for the Office of the Judges of Compensation Claims  
12 are transferred by a type two transfer, as defined in s.  
13 20.06(2), Florida Statutes, to the Office of the Judges of  
14 Compensation Claims within the Division of Administrative  
15 Hearings of the Department of Management Services.

16 Section 38. Except as otherwise provided herein, this  
17 act shall take effect October 1, 2001.