

By Senator Taddeo

40-00788B-21

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to reemployment assistance; amending
3 s. 443.111, F.S.; increasing the minimum and maximum
4 weekly and yearly benefit amounts for reemployment
5 assistance; increasing the duration of such benefits;
6 creating s. 443.1318, F.S.; providing exceptions to
7 reemployment assistance requirements during a declared
8 state of emergency or public health emergency;
9 reenacting ss. 443.041(2)(b) and 443.1116(7) and
10 (8)(a), F.S., relating to attorney fees and short-time
11 compensation, respectively, to incorporate the
12 amendments made to s. 443.111, F.S., in references
13 thereto; creating the Reemployment Assistance Benefits
14 Task Force adjunct to the Department of Economic
15 Opportunity; providing a purpose for the task force;
16 providing for membership of the task force; requiring
17 the task force to submit a report to the Governor and
18 the Legislature by a specified date; providing for the
19 expiration of the task force; providing an effective
20 date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

23
24 Section 1. Subsection (3) and paragraphs (b) and (c) of
25 subsection (5) of section 443.111, Florida Statutes, are amended
26 to read:

27 443.111 Payment of benefits.—

28 (3) WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT.—An individual's "weekly benefit
29 amount" is an amount equal to one twenty-sixth of the total

40-00788B-21

2021644__

30 wages for insured work paid during that quarter of the base
31 period in which the total wages paid were the highest, but not
32 less than \$200 ~~\$32~~ or more than \$600 ~~\$275~~. The weekly benefit
33 amount, if not a multiple of \$1, is rounded downward to the
34 nearest full dollar amount. The maximum weekly benefit amount in
35 effect at the time the claimant establishes an individual weekly
36 benefit amount is the maximum benefit amount applicable
37 throughout the claimant's benefit year.

38 (5) DURATION OF BENEFITS.—

39 (b) Each otherwise eligible individual is entitled during
40 any benefit year to a total amount of benefits equal to 25
41 percent of the total wages in his or her base period, not to
42 exceed \$27,600 ~~\$6,325~~ or the product arrived at by multiplying
43 the weekly benefit amount with the number of weeks determined in
44 paragraph (c), whichever is less. However, the total amount of
45 benefits, if not a multiple of \$1, is rounded downward to the
46 nearest full dollar amount. These benefits are payable at a
47 weekly rate no greater than the weekly benefit amount.

48 (c) For claims submitted during a calendar year, the
49 duration of benefits is limited to:

50 1. Twenty-six ~~Twelve~~ weeks if this state's average
51 unemployment rate is at or below 5 percent.

52 2. An additional week in addition to the 26 ~~12~~ weeks for
53 each 0.5 percent increment in this state's average unemployment
54 rate above 5 percent.

55 3. Up to a maximum of 46 ~~23~~ weeks if this state's average
56 unemployment rate equals or exceeds 10.5 percent.

57 Section 2. Section 443.1318, Florida Statutes, is created
58 to read:

40-00788B-21

2021644__

59 443.1318 Effect of state of emergency or public health
60 emergency.—During a state of emergency declared by the Governor
61 under chapter 252 or during a public health emergency declared
62 pursuant to s. 381.00315:

63 (1) The work search requirements under s. 443.091(1)(d) are
64 suspended for the duration of the state of emergency or public
65 health emergency.

66 (2) Individuals who are ineligible for benefits under this
67 chapter solely due to being a gig worker, an independent
68 contractor, or self-employed and who would otherwise be eligible
69 to receive benefits are eligible to receive benefits for the
70 duration of the state of emergency or public health emergency.

71 Section 3. For the purpose of incorporating the amendments
72 made by this act to section 443.111, Florida Statutes, in a
73 reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section
74 443.041, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

75 443.041 Waiver of rights; fees; privileged communications.—

76 (2) FEES.—

77 (b) An attorney at law representing a claimant for benefits
78 in any district court of appeal of this state or in the Supreme
79 Court of Florida is entitled to counsel fees payable by the
80 department as set by the court if the petition for review or
81 appeal is initiated by the claimant and results in a decision
82 awarding more benefits than provided in the decision from which
83 appeal was taken. The amount of the fee may not exceed 50
84 percent of the total amount of regular benefits permitted under
85 s. 443.111(5)(b) during the benefit year.

86 Section 4. For the purpose of incorporating the amendments
87 made by this act to section 443.111, Florida Statutes, in

40-00788B-21

2021644__

88 references thereto, subsection (7) and paragraph (a) of
89 subsection (8) of section 443.1116, Florida Statutes, are
90 reenacted to read:

91 443.1116 Short-time compensation.—

92 (7) TOTAL SHORT-TIME COMPENSATION BENEFIT AMOUNT.—An
93 individual may not be paid benefits under this section in any
94 benefit year for more than the maximum entitlement provided in
95 s. 443.111(5), and an individual may not be paid short-time
96 compensation benefits for more than 26 weeks in any benefit
97 year.

98 (8) EFFECT OF SHORT-TIME COMPENSATION BENEFITS RELATING TO
99 THE PAYMENT OF REGULAR AND EXTENDED BENEFITS.—

100 (a) The short-time compensation benefits paid to an
101 individual shall be deducted from the total benefit amount
102 established for that individual in s. 443.111(5).

103 Section 5. (1) The Reemployment Assistance Benefits Task
104 Force, a task force as defined in s. 20.03(8), Florida Statutes,
105 is created adjunct to the Department of Economic Opportunity.
106 Except as otherwise provided, the task force shall operate in a
107 manner consistent with s. 20.052, Florida Statutes.

108 (2) The purpose of the task force is to make
109 recommendations on how to improve the Reemployment Assistance
110 Claims and Benefits Information System established under s.
111 443.1113, Florida Statutes, including how to decrease the
112 likelihood of such system becoming inaccessible during periods
113 of high demand, and how to streamline and increase the
114 efficiency of the reemployment assistance application process.

115 (3) (a) The task force shall be comprised of 12 members,
116 appointed as follows:

40-00788B-21

2021644__

117 1. Four bipartisan members appointed by the Governor.

118 2. Four bipartisan members appointed by the President of
119 the Senate.

120 3. Four bipartisan members appointed by the Speaker of the
121 House of Representatives.

122 (b) All appointments must be made by August 1, 2021. A
123 vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the initial
124 appointment. The task force shall elect a chair from among its
125 members.

126 (4) The task force shall submit a report of their findings
127 and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the
128 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by
129 January 1, 2022.

130 (5) The Task force expires June 30, 2022.

131 Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.