



The Workplace Advocate

Workers' Compensation Reform at the Halfway Point!

We have very good news about House Bill 709 in the NC General Assembly! Workers' compensation reform has passed the House by a vote of 110 to 3 and will now go to the Senate!

After very hard work drafting a reasonable bill, excellent stewardship by the prime sponsor (Rep. Dale Folwell of Winston-Salem) and many difficult but fruitful discussions on a compromise, all parties agreed to support the bill. Yes, that means the trial lawyers and others who initially fought reform very hard did agree to the version linked in this email.

A broad coalition of business associations and practitioners put a great deal of time into this bill. It is now at the halfway point and we expect it to receive its first action in the Senate within seven to ten days. Because this version was agreed upon by the major interest groups, we expect it to pass, but we cannot be complacent. It is still a good idea to talk with your Senators and thank them for supporting this bill when the time comes.

Key points in the bill:

- A rational definition of "suitable employment" to help get people back to work
- A cap on Temp. Total Disability at 500 weeks
- Encouraging good vocational rehabilitation with real return to work provisions
- An anti-fraud provision
- Better ways to get information you need from health care providers
- A safety valve for injured employees who cannot earn any wages at all at week 500
- Important structural changes at the Industrial Commission to bring balance to the appointments as well as clarity and rationality to the rule-making process

Stay tuned...we expect to see passage of this balanced bill very soon. Thank you for the help you have all provided CAI, ECNC and the many business lobbies you support. It has made the difference!