

# CHAPTER 99-131

## House Bill No. 1951

An act relating to unemployment compensation; amending s. 1, ch. 97-29, Laws of Florida; directing the Division of Unemployment Compensation to reduce employers' tax rates for the year 2000; providing exceptions; providing a reduced initial tax rate for certain employers for the year 2000; amending s. 443.101, F.S.; clarifying provisions relating to disqualification for benefits; amending s. 443.111, F.S.; providing a temporary increase in the maximum weekly and yearly benefit amounts for unemployment compensation benefits for a specified period; amending s. 443.231, F.S.; providing an extension for the Florida Training Investment Program; providing effective dates.

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

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

Section 1. Notwithstanding section 443.131(3), Florida Statutes, for the ~~2000~~ 1998 calendar year or any quarter thereof, the division shall subtract 0.5 percent from each employer's assigned tax rate, except for those employers who are assigned the initial rate or who have been assigned a contribution rate of 5.4 percent or higher for more than 36 months. Notwithstanding section 443.131(2), Florida Statutes, for the ~~2000~~ 1998 calendar year, each employer whose employment record has been chargeable with benefit payments for less than eight calendar quarters shall pay contributions at the initial rate of 2 percent.

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

443.101 Disqualification for benefits.—An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

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

1. Disqualification for voluntarily quitting shall continue for the full period of unemployment next ensuing after he or she has left his or her full-time, part-time, or temporary work voluntarily without good cause and until such individual has earned income equal to or in excess of 17 times his or her weekly benefit amount; the term "good cause" as used in this subsection includes ~~shall include~~ only such cause as is attributable to the employing unit or which consists of illness or disability of the individual requiring

separation from his or her work. No other disqualification may be imposed. An individual shall not be disqualified under this subsection for voluntarily leaving temporary work to return immediately when called to work by the permanent employing unit that temporarily terminated his or her work within the previous 6 calendar months.

2. Disqualification for being discharged for misconduct connected with his or her work shall continue for the full period of unemployment next ensuing after having been discharged and until such individual has become reemployed and has earned income not less than 17 times his or her weekly benefit amount and for not more than 52 weeks ~~that~~ which immediately follow such week, as determined by the division in each case according to the circumstances in each case or the seriousness of the misconduct, pursuant to rules of the division enacted for determinations of disqualification for benefits for misconduct.

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

443.111 Payment of benefits.—

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

(5) DURATION OF BENEFITS.—

(a)1. Any otherwise eligible individual shall be entitled during any benefit year to a total amount of benefits equal to 25 percent of the total wages in the base period, not to exceed ~~\$7,150~~ \$6,500. For claims with benefit years beginning January 1, 2000 ~~July 1, 1997~~, through December 31, ~~2000~~ 1997, an additional amount equal to 5 percent of the weekly benefit amount multiplied by 8 shall be added to the calculated total amount of benefits, the sum of which may not exceed ~~\$7,254~~ \$6,596. For benefit years beginning January 1, 1998, any otherwise eligible individual shall be entitled during any benefit year to a total amount of benefits equal to 25 percent of the total wages in the base period, not to exceed ~~\$7,150~~. For claims with benefit years

~~beginning January 1, 1998, through June 30, 1998, an additional amount equal to 5 percent of the weekly benefit amount multiplied by 8 shall be added to the calculated total amount of benefits, the sum of which may not exceed \$7,254. However, such total amount of benefits, if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded downward to the nearest full dollar amount. Such benefits shall be payable at a weekly rate no greater than the weekly benefit amount.~~

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

Section 4. Effective June 30, 1999, subsection (8) of section 443.231, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

443.231 Florida Training Investment Program.—The Florida Training Investment Program is designed to extend additional benefit eligibility to dislocated workers throughout Florida who have lost their jobs, have limited marketable skills, and enroll in vocational training intended to lead to employment in a recognized occupation for which there is labor market demand. Pursuant thereto:

(8) TERMINATION.—The Florida Training Investment Program shall terminate on June 30, 2002 ~~1999~~. No benefits shall be paid under this program to any dislocated worker for training that occurs after June 30, 2002 ~~1999~~.

Section 5. Except as otherwise provided herein, this act shall take effect July 1, 1999.

Approved by the Governor April 15, 1999.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 15, 1999.