

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2843

Brief Description: Modifying unemployment compensation payable to individuals who took family and medical leave.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi and Conway

Hearing: January 31, 2000

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows an unemployment insurance claimant to request a special base year when the claimant has taken family and medical leave during the normal base year.

BACKGROUND:

To qualify for unemployment insurance benefits, a claimant must have worked at least 680 hours in his or her base year. The base year is either the first four of the last five calendar quarters completed before applying for benefits, or the last four completed calendar quarters.

The claimant's benefits are based on the wages earned during the base year. The maximum weeks of benefits that a claimant may receive is the lesser of one-third of the total base year wages or 30 times the claimant's weekly benefit amount. The weekly benefit amount is equal to 4 percent of the average of the claimant's wages in the two base year quarters in which wages are highest, subject to a statutory cap.

Under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, employees may take up to 12 weeks of leave, which may be paid or unpaid, in any 12-month period. The state family leave law (generally not enforced as long as the federal law is in effect) entitles an employee to up to 12 weeks of paid or unpaid leave in any 24-month period. Under some circumstances, leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

Beginning with unemployment claims filed after July 1, 2000, an applicant who has taken family and medical leave during his or her base year may request a special base year. The special base year would consist of four calendar quarters in which the applicant did not take family and medical leave, using the calendar quarters in the normal base year and the calendar quarters immediately preceding the normal base year.

Family and medical leave means leave taken under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act or the state family leave law.

RULES AUTHORITY: The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule making powers of an agency.

FISCAL NOTE: Requested January 25, 2000.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The bill takes effect on July 2, 2000.