AN ACT Relating to establishing voluntary exemptions to the long-term services and supports trust program for certain populations identified in the long-term services and supports trust commission's 2022 recommendations report, specifically including exemptions only for veterans with a service-connected disability of 70 percent or higher, the spouses or domestic partners of active duty service members, persons residing outside of Washington while working in Washington, and persons working in the United States under a temporary, nonimmigrant work visa; amending RCW 50B.04.080; and adding a new section to chapter 50B.04 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

Sec. 1. RCW 50B.04.080 and 2020 c 98 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Unless otherwise exempted pursuant to this chapter, beginning January 1, 2022, the employment security department shall assess for each individual in employment with an employer a premium based on the amount of the individual's wages. The initial premium rate is fifty-eight hundredths of one percent of the individual's wages. Beginning January 1, 2024, and biennially thereafter, the premium rate shall be set by the pension funding council at a rate no greater than fifty-eight hundredths of one percent of the individual's wages.
percent. In addition, the pension funding council must set the premium rate at the lowest amount necessary to maintain the actuarial solvency of the long-term services and supports trust account created in RCW 50B.04.100 in accordance with recognized insurance principles and designed to attempt to limit fluctuations in the premium rate. To facilitate the premium rate setting the office of the state actuary must perform a biennial actuarial audit and valuation of the fund and make recommendations to the pension funding council.

(2)(a) The employer must collect from the employees the premiums provided under this section through payroll deductions and remit the amounts collected to the employment security department.

(b) In collecting employee premiums through payroll deductions, the employer shall act as the agent of the employees and shall remit the amounts to the employment security department as required by this chapter.

(3) Nothing in this chapter requires any party to a collective bargaining agreement in existence on October 19, 2017, to reopen negotiations of the agreement or to apply any of the responsibilities under this chapter unless and until the existing agreement is reopened or renegotiated by the parties or expires.

(4)(a) Premiums shall be collected in the manner and at such intervals as provided in this chapter and directed by the employment security department.

(b) To the extent feasible, the employment security department shall use the premium assessment, collection, and reporting procedures in Title 50A RCW.

(5) The employment security department shall deposit all premiums collected in this section in the long-term services and supports trust account created in RCW 50B.04.100.

(6) Premiums collected in this section are placed in the trust account for the individuals who become eligible for the program.

(7) If the premiums established in this section are increased, the legislature shall notify each qualified individual by mail that the person's premiums have been increased, describe the reason for increasing the premiums, and describe the plan for restoring the funds so that premiums are returned to ((fifty-eight hundredths of one)) .58 percent of the individual's wages.
NEW SECTION.  Sec. 2.  A new section is added to chapter 50B.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning January 1, 2023, the employment security department shall accept and approve applications for voluntary exemptions from the premium assessment under RCW 50B.04.080 for any employee who meets criteria established by the employment security department for an exemption based on the employee's status as:

(a) A veteran of the United States military who has been rated by the United States department of veterans affairs as having a service-connected disability of 70 percent or greater;
(b) A spouse or registered domestic partner of an active duty service member in the United States armed forces whether or not deployed or stationed within or outside of Washington;
(c) An employee who holds a nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers, as recognized by federal law, and is employed by an employer in Washington; and
(d) An employee who is employed by an employer in Washington, but maintains a permanent address outside of Washington as the employee's primary location of residence.

(2) The employment security department shall adopt criteria, procedures, and rules for verifying the information submitted by the applicant for an exemption under subsection (1) of this section.

(3) An employee who receives an exemption under subsection (1) of this section may not become a qualified individual or eligible beneficiar and is permanently ineligible for coverage under this title, unless the exemption has been discontinued as provided in subsection (4), (5), or (6) of this section.

(4)(a) An exemption granted in accordance with the conditions under subsection (1)(b) of this section must be discontinued within 90 days of:

(i) The discharge or separation from military service of the employee's spouse or registered domestic partner; or
(ii) The dissolution of the employee's marriage or registered domestic partnership with the active duty service member.

(b) Within 90 days of the occurrence of either of the events in (a) of this subsection, an employee who has received an exemption under subsection (1) of this section shall:

(i) Notify the employment security department that the exemption must be discontinued because of the occurrence of either of the events in (a) of this subsection; and
(ii) Notify the employee's employer that the employee is no longer exempt and that the employer must begin collecting premiums from the employee in accordance with RCW 50B.04.080.

(c) Upon notification to the employment security department and the employer, the employee shall begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 and may become a qualified individual or eligible beneficiary upon meeting the requirements established in this chapter.

(d) Failure to begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 within 90 days of the occurrence of either of the events in (a) of this subsection shall result in the payment of any unpaid premiums, with interest, by the employee to the employment security department from the date on which the payment should have begun.

(5)(a) An exemption granted in accordance with the conditions under subsection (1)(c) of this section must be discontinued within 90 days of an employee changing the employee's nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers status to become a permanent resident or citizen employed in Washington.

(b) Within 90 days of the employee changing the employee's nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers status to become a permanent resident or citizen employed in Washington, the employee who has received an exemption under subsection (1)(c) of this section shall:

(i) Notify the employment security department that the employee no longer holds a nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers and is a permanent resident or citizen employed in Washington and the exemption must be discontinued; and

(ii) Notify the employee's employer that the employee no longer holds a nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers and is a permanent resident or citizen employed in Washington, and that the employer must begin collecting premiums from the employee in accordance with RCW 50B.04.080.

(c) Upon notification to the employment security department and the employer, the employee shall begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 and may become a qualified individual or eligible beneficiary upon meeting the requirements established in this chapter.

(d) Failure to begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 within 90 days of an employee no longer holding a nonimmigrant visa for temporary workers and becoming a permanent resident or citizen employed in Washington shall result in the
payment of any unpaid premiums, with interest, by the employee to the employment security department from the date on which the payment should have begun.

(6)(a) An exemption granted in accordance with the conditions under subsection (1)(d) of this section must be discontinued within 90 days of an employee establishing a permanent address within Washington as the employee's primary location of residence.

(b) Within 90 days of the employee establishing a permanent address within Washington as the employee's primary location of residence, the employee who has received an exemption under subsection (1)(d) of this section shall:

(i) Notify the employment security department that the employee is residing in Washington and the exemption must be discontinued; and

(ii) Notify the employee's employer that the employee is no longer exempt and that the employer must begin collecting premiums from the employee in accordance with RCW 50B.04.080.

(c) Upon notification to the employment security department and the employer, the employee shall begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 and may become a qualified individual or eligible beneficiary upon meeting the requirements established in this chapter.

(d) Failure to begin paying the premium established under RCW 50B.04.080 within 90 days of an employee establishing a permanent address within Washington as the employee's primary location of residence shall result in the payment of any unpaid premiums, with interest, by the employee to the employment security department from the date on which the payment should have begun.

(7) Exempt employees are not entitled to a refund of any premium deductions made before the effective date of an approved exemption.

(8) An employee who has received an exemption pursuant to this section shall provide written notification to all current and future employers of an approved exemption.

(9) If an exempt employee fails to notify an employer of an exemption, the exempt employee is not entitled to a refund of any premium deductions made before notification is provided.

(10) Employers may not deduct premiums after being notified by an employee of an approved exemption issued under this section.

(a) Employers shall retain written notifications of exemptions received from employees.
(b) An employer who deducts premiums after being notified by the employee of an exemption is solely responsible for refunding to the employee any premiums deducted after the notification.

(c) The employer is not entitled to a refund from the employment security department for any premiums remitted to the employment security department that were deducted from exempt employees.

(11) The provisions of RCW 50B.04.085 do not apply to the exemptions issued pursuant to this section.

(12) The employment security department shall adopt rules necessary to implement and administer the activities specified in this section related to the program, including rules on the submission and processing of applications under this section.

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