

By: Gallegos

S.B. No. 278

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of a state occupational health and safety plan; establishing a maintenance tax.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 411, Labor Code, is amended by adding Subchapter I to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I. STATE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

Sec. 411.151. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Employee" means an individual employed by an employer.

(2) "Employer" means a person that employs one or more individuals. The term does not include the state, a political subdivision of the state, or another governmental entity in this state.

Sec. 411.152. STATE PLAN. The commissioner shall develop a state plan relating to state enforcement of occupational health and safety standards. The state plan must comply with federal approval requirements under Section 18, Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 667). Standards adopted by the commissioner under the state plan may not be more stringent than the standards adopted by the United States Department of Labor.

Sec. 411.153. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMISSIONER AND DIVISION. (a) The department, through the division, is the state agency generally charged with implementation and enforcement of

1 state laws and administrative rules relating to the protection of
2 the life, health, and safety of persons at their places of
3 employment. The division may obtain information from any
4 appropriate source, including employers, that relates to
5 occupational health and safety issues.

6 (b) The division may conduct inspections of places of
7 employment at reasonable times as necessary to implement this
8 subchapter.

9 (c) The division shall:

10 (1) gather, maintain, and publish statistical
11 information relating to occupational health and safety programs
12 operated by other states in order to obtain data for an ongoing
13 comparative evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs
14 operated in this state;

15 (2) design and conduct research relating to the
16 prevention of job-related injuries and occupational disease;

17 (3) publish the results of its research;

18 (4) consult with employers regarding compliance with
19 state or federal occupational safety laws, rules, or agreements;

20 (5) develop programs designed to reduce job-related
21 injuries and occupational disease for use by employers, employees,
22 and other interested parties; and

23 (6) collect information relating to occupational
24 safety as required by state or federal laws, rules, or agreements.

25 (d) The commissioner may adopt rules and prescribe forms as
26 necessary to implement this subchapter.

27 (e) The division may charge fees for its publications and

1 for seminars and training programs offered by the division. The
2 commissioner shall set the fees in amounts reasonable and necessary
3 to cover administrative costs.

4 Sec. 411.154. EMPLOYER CLASSIFICATIONS; CONSULTATIONS. (a)
5 The division shall collect and compile information relating to the
6 job-related accident experience of each employer, including:

- 7 (1) the frequency of accidents;
8 (2) the existence and implementation of private safety
9 programs by the employer;
10 (3) man-hour losses due to employee injuries; and
11 (4) other factors considered relevant by the division.

12 (b) Based on the compiled information, the division shall:

- 13 (1) classify employers as necessary and appropriate to
14 assist employers in providing safe and healthful conditions of
15 employment; and
16 (2) identify hazardous occupations.

17 (c) On the written request of an employer, the division may
18 consult with and advise the employer or the employer's
19 representative regarding the improvement of the employer's
20 accident frequency rate and the elimination or reduction of
21 impediments to occupational health and safety at the employer's
22 place of business.

23 Sec. 411.155. FUNDING; MAINTENANCE TAX. (a) The
24 occupational health and safety plan adopted under this subchapter
25 is funded through the assessment of an annual maintenance tax
26 collected from each stock company, mutual company, reciprocal or
27 interinsurance exchange, and Lloyd's association that writes

1 workers' compensation insurance in this state. The commissioner of
2 insurance shall set the rate of the maintenance tax in an amount not
3 to exceed one percent of the correctly reported gross workers'
4 compensation insurance premiums of those insurers as reported to
5 the department under Subtitle E, Title 10, Insurance Code. The
6 commissioner of insurance shall set the rate of assessment each
7 year to produce the amount of funds that the commissioner estimates
8 will be necessary to operate the occupational health and safety
9 plan. The tax assessed under this section is in addition to all
10 other taxes imposed on those insurers for workers' compensation
11 purposes and shall be paid to the department at the same time that
12 the insurers pay the maintenance tax imposed under Chapter 255,
13 Insurance Code.

14 (b) The commissioner of insurance may adopt rules as
15 necessary relating to the assessment and collection of the
16 maintenance tax imposed under Subsection (a).

17 (c) The department shall remit all funds received under this
18 section to the comptroller for deposit in the state treasury to the
19 credit of the general revenue fund.

20 Sec. 411.156. EMPLOYER DUTIES. (a) Each employer shall
21 furnish and maintain a safe and healthful employee work
22 environment. The employer shall install, maintain, and use those
23 methods, processes, devices, and safeguards as are necessary to
24 protect the life, health, and safety of employees.

25 (b) Each employer shall report to the division in the manner
26 prescribed by the rules of the commissioner information relating to
27 personal injuries, fatalities, accidents, and other occupational

1 health and safety issues related to the employer's place of
2 business. The employer shall report on forms prescribed by and
3 covering time periods designated by the commissioner.

4 SECTION 2. Section 502.003, Health and Safety Code, is
5 amended by adding Subdivision (4-a) and by amending Subdivision (8)
6 to read as follows:

7 (4-a) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of
8 workers' compensation.

9 (8) "Division" means the division of workers'
10 compensation of the Texas Department of Insurance [~~"Director" means~~
11 ~~the director of the Texas Department of Health~~].

12 SECTION 3. Chapter 502, Health and Safety Code, is amended
13 by adding Section 502.0035 to read as follows:

14 Sec. 502.0035. ADMINISTRATION; REFERENCES. (a)
15 Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, this chapter
16 is administered by the commissioner.

17 (b) A reference in this chapter to the Texas Board of
18 Health, the Texas Department of Health, a successor agency to that
19 board or department, or to the director means the commissioner or
20 the division, or a successor officer or agency to the commissioner
21 or division, as appropriate.

22 SECTION 4. Section 411.018, Labor Code, is repealed.

23 SECTION 5. The commissioner of workers' compensation shall
24 adopt rules as necessary to implement Subchapter I, Chapter 411,
25 Labor Code, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2008,
26 and shall implement the state occupational health and safety plan
27 not later than September 1, 2008.

1 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.