

By: Walle

H.B. No. 1155

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to the establishment by the Texas Workforce Commission of
3 a pilot program to create voluntary internship opportunities for
4 certain persons receiving unemployment benefits.

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

6 SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, is
7 amended by adding Section 302.018 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 302.018. VOLUNTARY INTERNSHIP PILOT PROGRAM. (a) In
9 this section:

10 (1) "Eligible business" means an entity engaged in
11 commercial activity, other than this state or a political
12 subdivision of this state, subject to Subtitle C, Title 5, that:

13 (A) has workers' compensation insurance
14 coverage;

15 (B) is not engaged in a high-risk industry or
16 occupation as determined by the commission; and

17 (C) is designated as eligible to participate in
18 the pilot program by the executive director.

19 (2) "Intern" means an individual receiving
20 unemployment benefits under Chapter 207 or 209 who returns to the
21 workforce in an unpaid capacity as part of the pilot program.

22 (3) "Pilot program" means the voluntary internship
23 pilot program created under this section.

24 (b) The commission shall establish and implement a

1 voluntary internship pilot program in which an individual receiving
2 unemployment benefits under Chapter 207 or 209 may participate in
3 an unpaid internship with an eligible business without being denied
4 unemployment benefits.

5 (c) Eligible businesses and potential interns must register
6 with the commission in order to participate in the pilot program.

7 (d) An intern enrolled in the pilot program may work for an
8 eligible business for not more than eight weeks and not more than 32
9 hours per week.

10 (e) The commission shall provide eligible businesses and
11 potential interns with information on the legal requirements
12 necessary for an eligible business to engage the services of an
13 intern in an unpaid capacity.

14 (f) Not later than January 1, 2013, the commission shall
15 report to the legislature regarding the commission's:

16 (1) assessment of the effectiveness of the pilot
17 program in returning participants to paid positions in the
18 workforce; and

19 (2) recommendation regarding the continuation of the
20 pilot program.

21 (g) The commission may adopt rules necessary for the
22 administration of the pilot program.

23 (h) This section expires September 1, 2013.

24 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 207, Labor Code, is
25 amended by adding Section 207.0221 to read as follows:

26 Sec. 207.0221. COMMISSION-APPROVED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.

27 (a) An individual may not be denied benefits because the individual

1 is participating in the voluntary internship pilot program under
2 Section 302.018 with the approval of the commission.

3 (b) An individual may not be denied benefits for a benefit
4 period in which the individual is participating in the voluntary
5 internship pilot program with the approval of the commission
6 because of the provisions of Section 207.021 relating to the
7 individual's:

8 (1) availability for work;

9 (2) active search for work; or

10 (3) refusal to apply for or refusal to accept suitable
11 work.

12 (c) Approval of participation in the voluntary internship
13 pilot program must be obtained as required by rules adopted by the
14 commission.

15 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
16 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
17 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
18 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
19 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.