

New law provides that a woman performing public service for the state is entitled to be paid the same compensation as is paid to a man who performs the same service and that a distinction in compensation may not be made because of sex.

Defines "employee" as any female individual employed to work 40 or more hours a week and who is employed by the employer.

Defines "employer" as any department, office, division, agency, commission, board, committee, or other organizational unit of the state.

Makes it unlawful for an employer to pay wages to an employee at a rate less than the rate at which the employer pays wages to another employee of the opposite sex for the same or substantially similar work within the same agency.

Allows exceptions for instances when pay is made under a seniority system, a merit system, a system that measures earnings by quantity or quality of production, or a differential based on a factor other than sex as long as the system is job related or furthers a legitimate business purpose.

Prohibits an employer from reducing another employee's pay in order to comply with new law. Further declares it unlawful for a person to discharge or discriminate against an individual who has filed any charges, given any information, or testified in any inquiry relating to any right provided under new law.

Provides that it shall be unlawful for an employer to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of, or attempt to exercise, any right provided under new law. It shall be unlawful for any employer to discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any individual for inquiring about, disclosing, comparing, or otherwise discussing the employee's wages or the wages of any other employee, or aiding or encouraging any person to exercise his or her rights under new law.

Provides that an employee who believes that her employer has violated a provision of new law may provide written notice to the employer of the violation. Provides that an employer who receives written notice of a violation shall have 60 days to remedy the violation. Further provides that if the employer does not remedy the violation within the 60 days, the employee may bring an action against the employer with the Human Rights Commission.

Provides that if the commission finds evidence of discriminatory action on the part of the employer but fails to resolve the dispute, or fails to render a decision on the dispute within 120 days, the employee may institute a civil suit in the 19th Judicial District Court.

Provides that an employer in violation of the provisions of new law may be liable for damages inclusive of unpaid wages and reasonable attorney fees and costs.

Provides that monetary relief for a violation of new law is limited to a 36-month period prior to the employee's written notice. Provides that said monetary relief cannot be awarded for losses incurred between the time of the district court's final decision and the final determination of any higher appellate court, as the case may be.

Provides that interim earnings by the employee shall reduce the amount of damages. Provides that the employer and employee may settle for a lesser amount of damages.

Provides an employer with reasonable damages, attorney fees, and court costs when an employee is found by a court to have brought a frivolous claim.

Provides for a one-year prescriptive period in bringing any action to recover from the time the employee knows about the violation. Provides for a suspension of this period during the 60-day period in which the employer has to respond to the employee's written notice and during the pendency of any administrative review or investigation by the commission or the U.S. Dept. of Labor.

Requires employers to make and preserve records that document names, addresses, positions of employees, and their wages. The records shall be preserved for not less than three years.

Provides that new law shall not supercede prior law prohibiting discrimination based on sex.

Effective August 1, 2013.

(Adds R.S. 23:661-669)