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## DIGEST

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HB 1101 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Melerine

**Abstract:** Provides relative to maximum medical improvement, certain income benefits, the misrepresentation of benefits or payments, and the rehabilitation of injured employees under workers' compensation.

Present law defines certain terms.

Proposed law adds the definition of maximum medical improvement and otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides that if any dispute arises as to the condition of the employee or the employee's capacity to work, the assistant secretary of the office of workers' compensation administration (OWCA), upon application of any party, shall order an additional medical opinion regarding an examination of the employee. Present law further provides that the examination shall be conducted by a medical practitioner who is selected and appointed by the assistant secretary.

Proposed law adds and clarifies that a dispute of the parties can include but is not limited to the cause of the employee's condition regardless of whether the employee has reached maximum medical improvement. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Present law requires the medical examiner to report his conclusions from the examination to the assistant secretary of OWCA and to the parties. Present law provides that the report shall be prima facie evidence of the facts stated in any subsequent proceedings pursuant to present law.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law prohibits a person, whether on his own behalf or another person's behalf, from willfully making a false statement or representation in order to obtain or prevent any benefits or payments due pursuant to present law.

Proposed law provides that the elements required for fraud provided for in present law (R.S. 23:1208(A)(1)) are exclusive and that no further requirements are necessary to establish fraud. Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law prohibits the assertion of a defense of fraud regardless of whether the false statement or representation does not alter a medical expert's opinion concerning causation or treatment of an injured or occupational disease, if the false statement or representation would be prohibited pursuant

to present law (R.S. 23:1208(A)(1)).

Present law provides that compensation owed in workers' compensation claims shall be paid in accordance with the established schedule of payments provided for in present law, which includes temporary total disability and supplemental earnings benefits.

Present law provides that temporary total disability benefits shall cease when the employee's physical condition has resolved itself to the point that a reasonably reliable determination of the extent of the employee's disability may be made and the employee's physical condition has improved to the point that continued, regular treatment by a physician is not required.

Proposed law instead provides that temporary total disability benefits shall cease when the employee's physical condition has resolved itself to the point of maximum medical improvement.

Proposed law provides that payment of temporary total disability benefits shall not exceed a maximum of 156 weeks. Proposed law further provides that the termination of temporary total disability benefits shall not preclude an award of benefits provided for permanent total disability, supplemental earning benefits, and permanent partial disability.

Present law provides for the award of supplemental earnings benefits for an injury resulting in the employee's inability to earn a certain percentage of his pre-injury wages and provides for the calculation of that amount. Proposed law retains present law.

Present law provides that supplemental earnings benefits shall not exceed a maximum of 520 weeks.

Proposed law changes the weeks from 520 weeks to 416 weeks.

Present law provides that, after receipt of a maximum of 520 weeks of supplemental earnings benefits, an employer shall be entitled to a reduction of one full week of compensation against the maximum number of weeks that compensation was paid. However, present law further provides that an employer shall not be entitled to a reduction if the employee was not paid supplemental earnings benefits during any week that compensation was owed to him.

Proposed law changes the weeks from 520 weeks to 416 weeks and otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides that the employee shall be entitled to rehabilitation services if the employee has suffered an injury covered by present law, which precludes the employee from earning wages equal to his pre-injury wages.

Proposed law clarifies that the employee shall be entitled to vocational rehabilitation services. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides that the goal of rehabilitation services is to return a worker with a disability to work, with a minimum of retraining, as soon as possible after an injury occurs.

Proposed law instead provides that the goal of vocational rehabilitation services is to return a worker with a disability to suitable gainful employment, with a minimum of retraining, as soon as possible after an injury occurs.

Proposed law defines suitable gainful employment as a position offered by the employer or a position identified by the vocational rehabilitation counselor that is within the employee's physical work restrictions and available within the employee's community or a reasonable geographic area, regardless of whether the specific position is approved by a physician or offered to the employee.

(Amends R.S. 23:1021(intro. para), 1123, 1208(A), 1221(intro. para.), (1)(d), and (3)(d)(intro. para.) and (ii), and 1226(A) and (B)(1)(intro. para.) and (3)(a); Adds R.S. 23:1021(14))

### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations to the original bill:

1. Remove provision of proposed law that provides for when income benefits and death benefits due pursuant to present law and proposed law shall terminate.
2. Make title and technical changes.