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Legal Update: Minimum Wage Changes

After years of debate, President Bush finally signed legislation, on May 25, that increases the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour in three steps over a period of 26 months. The changes will affect employers in different ways, depending on the state in which their employees work.

The federal minimum wage will increase from \$5.15 per hour to:

- \$5.85: 60 days after enactment (i.e., effective, July 24, 2007),
- \$6.55: 1 year after the first increase (July 24,

2008), and

- \$7.25: 2 years after the first increase (July 24, 2009).

The federal changes will have a different effect in the states that had already set the state minimum wage above the old federal minimum. Because federal law covers nearly all employees, **employers may effectively ensure compliance with both federal and state law simply by always paying the rate most beneficial to the employee.**

Source: US Dept. of Labor

The current state minimum

wage in North Carolina is currently \$6.15. So, NC employers won't be affected by the federal changes until the second step (July 24, 2008, when the federal minimum wage rises to \$6.55 per hour).

But, you must still post an updated federal poster that shows the new federal minimum wage. Updates are available at:

www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/posters/flsa.htm

See page two for more information regarding NC's updated labor posters.

Meet SWS Team Member Carol Rovello



Carol helps companies to align human resource initiatives with business operations, anticipate and address HR challenges, and institute the structure needed to support organizational change. Since she started her first consulting practice in October 1984, she has consulted with a broad

range of clients in private industry as well as public and private non-profit organizations.

Her professional development focus has been communications-based programs, including leadership, teambuilding, and customer service, all of which address diversity issues.

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NC Dept. of Labor Updated Posters Now Available

Every employer, no matter how small, MUST put up a new minimum wage poster each time the law changes. Since the NC minimum wage changed this year, a new poster was created by the NC Department of Labor.

The traditional all-in-one NC DOL poster was separated into two so that the NCOSHA information could be moved to its own poster.

NC posters can be requested at the following link:

<http://www.nclabor.com/posters/posters.htm>.

You may download state and federal posters at this site, although the federal minimum wage poster was not updated as of this printing. These notices are free.

Strategic Workplace Solutions has a number of the updated NC posters in stock.

We would be happy to send one set to you while supplies last—at no cost of course. Just send us an email.

“Save time and money by following an intentional process that helps you to identify and retain good employees”

Performance Management Overview

Independent, competent employees are made, not born. Your approach to hiring and performance management determines whether your employees are a cost or a benefit to your organization. Save time and money by following an intentional process that helps you to identify and retain

good employees.

Performance management includes all activities that help employees to make good work decisions, exhibit good work performance, and behave appropriately on the job.

It starts with an **employee selection** process that not

only helps you to match the right person to the right job, but tells your potential employees about your expectations for work performance and behavior.

It continues with an **orientation** program that teaches your new employee

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Carol Rovello, cont'd.

As an adjunct instructor, she taught *Principles of Management*, *Human Resource Management*, *People Skills*, and *Non-Profit Management* courses.

Between September 2000 and January 2006, Carol served as the Director of Employee and Organization Development for Asheville-

Buncombe Technical Community College. In this position, she provided leadership for professional development, diversity, human resource-related projects, and organization development for major college initiatives, including regional accreditation. During this time, she continued to provide independent human resource consulting and training services.

Carol earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education, a Master's Degree in Administration, and her certification as a Senior Professional of Human Resources (SPHR).

She presently serves as the president of the WNC Human Resource Association, and a member of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, where she has volunteered as the chair of the Hot Tips Task Force and HR program presenter.

Employees Typically Undervalue Benefits

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) recently published its 2007 Benefits Survey Report. This survey revealed that 40% of U.S. employer's payroll typically represents the cost of benefits.

Employees consistently rate benefits as one of the key factors in job satisfaction. But a disconnect exists between the dollar amount organizations spend on benefits and employees' perception of the value of their benefits package.

"It is essential that HR professionals help employees fully understand all their options and the true value of their benefits package," SHRM Survey Research Specialist Shawn Fegley advises. "Total compensation statements, employee meetings and workshops are examples of communication methods that HR professionals can use so their benefits program

is valued and used by employees."

A large majority of HR professionals review their benefits programs at least once a year, the survey reveals. HR professionals can use benchmarking tools, survey reports and needs assessments to customize their benefits program to meet employee needs and to remain competitive.

In addition, HR professionals should monitor changes in legislation to make sure their benefits remain compliant with local, state and federal laws and regulations.

Non-Health/Retirement Benefits Most Offered by Respondents

96% - professional development opportunities

91% - professional memberships

78% - professional license application or renewal fees

76% - dependent care flexible spending accounts

68% - undergraduate educational assistance; 65% - graduate educational assistance

65% - life insurance for dependents

58% - flextime (employees select work hours within limits)

56% telecommuting (21% allow full time basis)

48% - cross training to develop skills not related to the current job

41% - some form of domestic partnership benefits (same sex, opposite sex, or both)

27% - career counseling

26% - formal mentoring programs

22% - eldercare referral service; 21% - child care referral service

Source: Stephen Miller, SHRM website, 6/24/07

"Review benefits not only to monitor costs but also to evaluate the competitiveness of your program."

Performance Management, cont'd.

how to do the job, further clarifies your expectations, and provides a basis for evaluating job performance.

It includes a performance appraisal process that **emphasizes regular and consistent feedback** and uses a periodic meeting to **summarize** previously discussed strengths and needed

changes.

And, last but not least, it provides a **mechanism for employees to develop the knowledge and skills** needed to fulfill job responsibilities and contribute to company goal attainment.

If your company has a once-a year performance evaluation process,

but not a comprehensive performance management approach that helps employees to understand and meet performance expectations and standards, stay tuned...

The next four issues will provide specific strategies for instituting a performance management process that helps you to develop independent, competent employees.



Human Resource Leadership for Improved Profitability

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**The right human resource decision today
improves your profitability tomorrow.**

SWS helps organizations to:

Improve individual and organizational performance

Identify and resolve HR challenges

Enhance employee relations/communications



Strategic Workplace Solutions Now Offers Services on a Retainer Basis

Many small businesses don't have a human resource professional on staff, but they do periodically have a need for HR assistance. To meet this need, Strategic Workplace Solutions now offers HR services on a retainer basis.

What employment laws apply to our business?

What type of employment records do we have to keep and for how long?

Is this worker an independent contractor or an employee?

Do we have to pay our employees overtime?

These are just some of the many questions that we can help answer. And, we can help you develop sound human resource practices and documents that support your business goals and comply with related laws.

We can provide answers to your routine HR questions or consultation to help you address critical HR challenges.

When you use us on a retainer basis, we make every effort to reply to your phone or email message no later than one business day.

We also provide a monthly HR update each month in which there

is something pertinent to report.

If you would like to see a sample retainer agreement, just send us an email.

If you would like to schedule a one-hour complimentary conversation to explore your HR needs with us and learn more about our services, feel free to contact us via phone or email. We would look forward to meeting with you.

At your request, we will submit a proposal to help you identify and resolve HR challenges to better attain your business goals.