



Office on the Economic Status of Women

Overview of Women's Economic Security Act (Laws of Minnesota 2014, [Chapter 239](#))

- **Non-Traditional Jobs for Women**
 - Representation on the Governor's Workforce Development Council—person with expertise in helping women get jobs in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations.
 - Grants to increase number of women in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations.
 - Recruitment, training and placement, including low-income women and older women.
 - Raise awareness among girls about non-traditional opportunities—mentoring, apprenticeships, internships for girls.
 - \$500,000 for grants; \$250,000 for apprenticeships for women in nontraditional fields.

- **Unemployment benefits** for those who quit due to sexual assault or stalking (already allowed for domestic abuse).

- **Equal Pay Certificate**
 - Businesses with 40+ employees who contract with state for \$500,000+ must certify that
 - They are in compliance with existing federal and state equal pay laws;
 - Average compensation for female employees is not consistently below that for male employees within major job categories.
 - State contractors must also state what system they use to set compensation and benefits:
 - Market pricing
 - State prevailing wage or union contract requirements (state law sets the hourly wage that must be paid on state construction projects)
 - Performance pay system
 - Internal analysis
 - An alternative approach.

- **Women Entrepreneurs**
 - \$500,000 for grants to two nonprofits to develop model programs that will encourage women entrepreneurs to start businesses in high-growth, high-revenue industry sectors—these are generally in male-dominated industries, like construction, transportation, warehousing, agriculture, mining, finance, insurance, technology.

- **Study of a State Retirement Savings Plan**
 - For private sector employees who are not offered a retirement savings plan by their employers.
 - A voluntary, opt-out, automatic payroll deduction plan.
 - Pooled and invested by State Board of Investment.

- **Unpaid Pregnancy and Parenting leave**
 - Increases mandatory unpaid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child from the current 6 weeks to 12 weeks.
 - Expands use of this unpaid leave for pregnancy-related health conditions.

- **Sick Leave**
 - For those employees who have personal sick leave benefits.
 - Currently must be allowed not only for employee's illness, but also for an illness or injury to employee's child, spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent, or stepparent. Expands allowable uses to care for a mother-in-law, father-in-law, or grandchild.
 - Employee may use sick leave for safety leave (leave necessitated by sexual assault, domestic abuse, or stalking).

- **Pregnancy Accommodations**
 - Employer must provide reasonable workplace accommodations to employee for health conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth (unless it would cause undue hardship on employer). E.g. more frequent restroom, food and water breaks, being allow to sit, limits on lifting heavy weights.

- **Wage Disclosure Protection**
 - Employer can't prohibit employees from discussing wages and cannot retaliate against an employee for discussing her or another employee's wages.

- **Nursing Mothers**
 - Current law requires employers to provide reasonable unpaid break time to an employee to express breast milk, but no penalties for not doing so. This law says nursing mothers must be provided, if reasonable, not only a separate place to express breast milk, but a place other than a bathroom and one that is private and has access to an electrical outlet.
 - An employer can't retaliate against an employee for exercising these rights.
 - Employees can bring a civil action to recover damages, including attorney's fees, against an employer for failure to comply.

- **Prohibit workplace discrimination based on familial status**
 - Cannot discriminate based on an employee having minor children or being pregnant.

- **Penalties for Non-Compliance**
 - The MN Commissioner of Labor & Industry now can levy a \$1,000 penalty for willful and repeated violations of provisions for pregnancy and parenting leave, sick/safety leave, pregnancy accommodations, nursing mothers, and wage disclosure protections.