

## **Employment NewsFlash**

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Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP 2005 Market Street
Suite 2600
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7018
215.564.8000 Telephone
215.564.8120 Facsimile
www.stradley.com

With other offices in: Washington, D.C. New York New Jersey Illinois Delaware



www.meritas.org

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# **Location-Specific Laws Enhance Rights For Workers**

States and major cities continue to proactively enhance rights for workers through location-specific laws. As the patchwork of employment laws across the nation grows, trends in location-specific laws emerge, often focusing on the following key areas.

#### Minimum Wage and Fair Workweek

The federal minimum wage has remained the same since 2009. The U.S. Department of Labor is back to the proposed rule stage (<a href="https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20190307">https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20190307</a>) in its efforts to narrow employee overtime exemptions.

States and major cities, however, continue to rapidly increase location-specific minimum wage rates. For example, on July 1, D.C.'s minimum hourly wage will increase to \$14, Philadelphia's to \$13.25, Chicago's to \$13 and New Jersey's to \$10, with additional increases in successive years. New York's minimum wage will increase to \$11.80 on Dec. 31, with additional changes within New York City. Additional location-specific minimum wage changes are tracked on the Economic Policy Institute's Minimum Wage Tracker (https://www.epi.org/minimum-wage-tracker/).

Often impacting minimum wage jobs, unpredictable work schedules are particularly prevalent in the food service, hotel, retail and other service industries. Laws requiring advance notice of work schedules and changes, typically called "fair workweek" laws, continue to take effect. Fair workweek laws now exist in New York City, Philadelphia, Seattle, Oregon and certain California cities, with more likely on the way.

#### **#MeToo and Nondisclosure Agreements**

In response to the #MeToo movement, lawmakers continue to enact and propose legal reforms and mandates regulating employer workplace harassment prevention and response, as previously reported (<a href="https://www.stradley.com/insights/publications/2018/05/employment-newsflash-may-21-2018">https://www.stradley.com/insights/publications/2018/05/employment-newsflash-may-21-2018</a>).

Among other reforms, such laws often include prohibitions against agreements that prevent employees from publicly exposing alleged discrimination or harassment. New York and California started the legal reforms, with other jurisdictions following thereafter. New Jersey is the latest state to regulate nondisclosure covenants, recently enacting a new law (<a href="https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/S0500/121\_R2.PDF">https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/S0500/121\_R2.PDF</a>) significantly restricting the use of nondisclosure covenants in employment contracts and settlement agreements.

#### **Family Leave and Sick Time**

Currently, federal law only requires larger employers to offer family and medical leave, and then only unpaid leave. In response, many states and cities enacted their own paid sick day laws, typically offering five to eight paid sick days per year, and 10 states, D.C. and 19 cities currently or will soon mandate paid sick time.

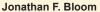
A few jurisdictions enacted their own family leave laws (California, D.C., New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Washington), and more are expected, particularly if a nationwide paid family leave law does not gain traction.

Even states with paid family leave laws continue to enhance those laws. New Jersey recently amended its Family Leave Act (https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/ approved/20190219a.shtml), extending coverage to smaller employers (30 or more employees), allowing employees to take leave to care for generally anyone with whom the employee has a relationship equivalent to family, offering more options for intermittent leave, doubling the length of paid leave time, and increasing the rate at which leave will be paid.

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Employment laws continue to rapidly change on a state and local level, with multistate and small employers often sustaining the greatest impact. Employers should continue to work with human resources and legal personnel in order to track legal updates and remain compliant.







A. Nicole Stover

For more information, contact Jonathan F. Bloom at 215.564.8065 or jbloom@stradley.com or A. Nicole Stover at 856.321.2418 or nstover@stradley.com.

### **Stradley Ronon's Employment & Labor Practice Group**

Jonathan F. Bloom, chair	jbloom@stradley.com	215.564.8065
Danielle Banks	dbanks@stradley.com	215.564.8116
Chelsea Biemiller	cbiemiller@stradley.com	215.564.8550
Adam D. Brown	abrown@stradley.com	215.564.8729
Joseph W. Catuzzi	jcatuzzi@stradley.com	215.564.8680
Penelope Cilluffo	pcilluffo@stradley.com	484.323.6432
Kristen M. Gibbons Feden	kfeden@stradley.com	215.564.8076
Adriel J. Garcia	agarcia@stradley.com	215.564.8022
Samantha Kats	skats@stradley.com	484.323.1354
Elizabeth A. Kuschel	ekuschel@stradley.com	215.564.8539
William E. Mahoney Jr	wmahoney@stradley.com	215.564.8059
Francis X. Manning	fmanning@stradley.com	856.321.2403
John J. Murphy III	jmurphy@stradley.com	215.564.8019
Corey S. D. Norcross	cnorcross@stradley.com	215.564.8742
Michael D. O'Mara	momara@stradley.com	215.564.8121
James F. Podheiser	jpodheiser@stradley.com	215.564.8111
Ellen Rosen Rogoff	erogoff@stradley.com	215.564.8058
Amy E. Sparrow	asparrow@stradley.com	484.323.1353
A. Nicole Stover	nstover@stradley.com	856.321.2418