

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

- Reduction of the temporary disability maximum limit to 104 weeks;
- Allowing employers to direct the medical treatment to be received by those claiming workplace injuries, except in emergency situations;
- Elimination of the ability to claim permanent disability from a soft tissue injury when an employee returns to the same job;
- Changing the method of appointing the court administrator;
- Allowing only treating physicians to determine that an injured worker is permanently impaired;
- Eliminating percentage payments of attorneys' fees and making attorneys' fees dependent on the number of hours involved in working a case;
- Elimination of lump sum settlements;
- Focusing on employer and employee education and safety;
- Criminalization of workers' compensation fraud as a felony punishable by prison time and a fine; and
- Amending current law to tighten the definition of compensable injuries in cases where the worker has ended their employment with a company and had neither previously reported a work-related injury nor sought medical treatment for such an injury.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
11/13/96

LABOR SURPLUS AREAS NAMED IN OKLAHOMA

■(GIT) The U.S. Department of Labor designated 19 counties and two cities in Oklahoma as labor surplus areas until Sept. 30, 1997. DOL designated a total of 1,370 areas across the United States as labor surplus areas because of high unemployment, said Cynthia Grindstaff, an Oklahoma Department of Commerce research analyst.

The nineteen Oklahoma counties include Choctaw, Coal, Haskell, Hughes, Kay less Ponca City, Latimer, Le Flore, McCurtain, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee less the city of Muskogee, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Pawnee, Pittsburg, Pushmataha, Seminole, Sequoyah and Stephens Counties.

The two Oklahoma cities that have been named surplus areas include Ponca City and Muskogee.

Labor surplus areas are eligible for federal procurement preference and are listed in a federal register. The areas are given priority over foreign bids when government entities are seeking bids for goods or services, Grindstaff said.

Labor surplus areas also automatically qualify for Enterprise Zone status, however, the areas must apply for the status. Companies within or relocating to an Enterprise Zone become eligible to receive doubled

longer lasting incentives given by the state. According to Grindstaff not all the areas in Oklahoma have applied for that status.

An area must have had an average unemployment rate of at least 7.1 percent for the two-year period 1994-1995 to be designated as a labor surplus area. The qualifying unemployment rate of 7.1 percent is a substantial decrease from the 7.8 percent qualifying rate for Fiscal Year 1996 and stems from a decline in the national unemployment rate.

Many observers look to this data as an indication whether the economic condition of a geographic area is improving or declining.

The labor surplus area classification list is effective October 1, 1996, through September 30, 1997.

The list of labor surplus areas and a complete description of the classification criteria—as well as updates to the annual list—are contained in "Area Trends in Employment and Unemployment," a monthly publication prepared by the Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA).

The publication is available at a cost of \$41 for a 12-month subscription or \$4.50 for a single issue. To subscribe or receive a copy, contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (202-783-3238).

—MICHELLE BOYD WATERS
11/13/96

GROWING COMPANY HOLDS JOB FAIR

■(GIT) The search for qualified machinists to help their booming business expand finally led Pro-Fab, Inc. of Oklahoma City to set up a Job Fair. Hoping to fill 50 new positions to add to the work force of 100, Pro-Fab will introduce prospective employees to their facility Saturday. If the job fair is successful, other growing businesses in Oklahoma might adopt the strategy.

Coordinator Mickey Quoetone said a nationwide shortage of skilled machinists has left the firm shorthanded at a time when growth is only waiting for enough people to do the jobs. "We have enough work for 24-hours-a-day," she said, "but only enough people for one and one-half shifts."

After trying all the traditional ways to attract experienced workers—newspaper advertising, radio spots, and use of employ-

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