

Tell Locke his job-killing 40% tax increase should be scrapped

■ Let's start by eliminating workers' comp loopholes

■ If a worker is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of an on the job injury, Governor Gary Locke's Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) allows this worker to receive workers' compensation time loss and medical benefits.

■ If a worker is an illegal alien who has provided fraudulent I-9 information, he/she is entitled to workers' compensation benefits for an on the job injury.

■ If a worker is provided with a light duty job offer, accepts it, but is fired to due to his/her own actions (i.e. no call, no show for work), he/she is still entitled to ongoing time loss benefits.

■ If a worker is employed in construction less than twelve months out of the year, his/her wages are not averaged and he/she is paid time loss benefits as though a full-time, year-round employee.

■ If an injured worker has a history of drug addiction or alcoholism and the doctor is overprescribing addictive narcotic medications, he/she is entitled to drug rehabilitation paid for by L&I.

■ If a worker is not sure of the date of injury, there are judges at the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals who will assist the worker in picking an "on or about" date.

■ If a worker claims he/she was going to be getting a raise a month after the injury date, L&I must pay the worker's benefits based on what he/she says his/her expected earnings after the injury would have been.

■ If an injured worker is on time loss benefits, he/she is paid an eight percent cost-of-living raise every year.

These are just a few of the frustrating situations that plague employers who are trying to lower their workers' compensation costs. They are not isolated incidences...the BIAW Return on Industrial Insurance (ROI) claims team deals with claims involving these situations on a daily basis. No wonder Governor Locke wants to increase your work-

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ers' comp rates by 40 percent next year. Somebody has to pay for this insanity.

Much of the problem lies in the Legislature's mandate that L&I is to "construe liberally on the behalf of the injured worker." RCW 51.12.010 states that the statute "shall be liberally construed for the purpose of reducing to a minimum the suffering and economic loss arising from injuries . . . occurring in the course of employment." But one wonders if the Legislature had the above scenarios in mind when it wrote that law?

Given this type of legislation and L&I's very liberal interpretation of it, it is no wonder Washington State boasts one of the most costly, and most generous, workers' comp systems in the nation. For employers struggling to stay afloat, it is disheartening to see illegal immigrants, marginal employ-

ees, drug-seeking claimants, less than ethical doctors, and just plain freeloaders protected by L&I's liberal interpretation of an already liberal law. It is especially frustrating to know L&I wants to increase your worker's comp rates by 40 percent to sustain this warped system.

But we have a chance to change it. Fill out the tear-out cards protesting the rate increase on this page and send it to Governor Locke. This is your chance to tell Locke that he needs to cut out the fat and fix the system—not increase your taxes. 🏠

BIAW/NAHB 2002-2003 Calendar of Events

November 6-8, 2002
BIAW Fall Board Meeting
Wenatchee, WA

January 21-24, 2003
NAHB Convention
Las Vegas, NV

February 24-26, 2003
BIAW Winter Board Meeting
BIAW Legislative Reception
Olympia, WA

May 7-11, 2003
NAHB Spring Board Meeting
Washington, DC

June 25 - 27, 2003
BIAW Summer Board Meeting
Semi-ah-Moo, WA

September 17-21, 2003
NAHB Fall Board Meeting
Boston, MA

October 22-24, 2003
BIAW Fall Board Meeting
Skamania, WA

