

HOUSE BILL NO. 1283

Introduced by

Representatives Carlson, Boucher, Poolman

Senators Kinnoin, G. Nelson, Krebsbach

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 65-05-17, 65-05-20.1, 65-05-26, and
2 65-05.2-02 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to increasing workers' compensation
3 death benefits; and to provide an effective date.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 65-05-17 of the 1997 Supplement to the North
6 Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **65-05-17. Weekly compensation allowances for death claims.** If death results from
8 an injury under the conditions specified in section 65-05-16, the fund shall pay to the following
9 persons, for the periods specified, ~~a weekly compensation:~~

10 1. To the decedent's spouse or to the guardian of the children of the decedent, an
11 amount equal to ~~sixty-six and two thirds percent of the weekly wage of the~~
12 ~~decedent, not to exceed the state's average weekly wage in effect at the time of~~
13 ~~the death~~ the benefit rate for total disability under section 65-05-09. These
14 benefits continue until the death or remarriage of the decedent's spouse; or, if the
15 surviving children of the decedent are under the care of a guardian, until those
16 children no longer meet the definition of "child" in this title. If there is more than
17 one guardian for the children who survive the decedent, the bureau shall divide the
18 death benefits equally among the children and shall pay benefits to the children's
19 guardians. ~~Total weekly death benefits paid may not be less than sixty percent of~~
20 ~~the maximum weekly death benefits payable.~~ Total death benefits, including
21 supplementary benefits, paid on any one claim may not exceed one hundred
22 ninety-seven thousand dollars. All recipients of benefits under this subsection are
23 eligible for benefits at the rate provided in this section, regardless of the date of
24 death of the deceased employee.

1 2. To each child of the deceased employee, the amount of ten dollars per week. This
2 rate must be paid to each eligible child regardless of the date of death. The bureau
3 may pay the benefit directly to the child of the deceased employee or to the
4 surviving parent or guardian of the child. Dependency allowance may not be
5 reduced by the percentage of aggravation.

6 3. In addition to the payments provided under subsections 1 and 2, ~~the bureau shall~~
7 ~~make~~ a payment in the sum of ~~six~~ twelve hundred dollars to the decedent's spouse
8 or the guardian of the children of the decedent and ~~two~~ four hundred dollars for
9 each dependent child. Where there is more than one guardian of the decedent's
10 surviving children, the ~~six~~ twelve hundred dollars must be divided equally among
11 the children and paid to the children's guardians.

12 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 65-05-20.1 of the 1997 Supplement to the North
13 Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

14 **65-05-20.1. (Effective through July 31, 2001) Scholarship fund - Rules.** The bureau
15 may establish a scholarship fund to provide scholarships for the spouse and dependent children
16 of a worker who dies as a result of a compensable work-related injury, if the spouse and
17 children have received benefits under section 65-05-17. The bureau may also grant
18 scholarships to injured workers for whom the bureau determines a scholarship would be
19 beneficial and appropriate because of exceptional circumstances as determined by the bureau.
20 Scholarships are payable to an accredited institution of higher education or an institution of
21 technical education on behalf of a student attending that institution. The total amount awarded
22 annually in scholarships may not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars. The maximum
23 amount payable on behalf of an applicant is ~~one three thousand five hundred~~ dollars per year
24 for no more than five years. Scholarships must be awarded by a panel chosen by the bureau.
25 The bureau shall adopt rules establishing selection criteria and obligations associated with the
26 program and identifying information an applicant is required to submit to determine an
27 appropriate scholarship award. There is no right to reconsideration, rehearing, or appeal from
28 any decision regarding the award, denial, or amount of a scholarship.

29 **SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 65-05-26 of the 1997 Supplement to the North
30 Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

1 **65-05-26. Burial expenses.** If death benefits are payable under section 65-05-16, the
2 fund shall pay to the facility handling the funeral arrangements of the deceased employee burial
3 expenses not to exceed ~~five~~ six thousand five hundred dollars.

4 **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 65-05.2-02 of the 1997 Supplement to the North
5 Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

6 **65-05.2-02. Supplementary benefits - Amount.** A claimant who is eligible for
7 supplementary benefits and who is receiving permanent total disability benefits, or death
8 benefits regardless of the date of death, is entitled to receive a weekly supplementary benefit
9 that, when added to the weekly permanent total disability benefit or death benefit, results in a
10 combined benefit of at least sixty percent of the state's average weekly wage on July first of
11 each year. An annual recalculation of supplementary benefits may not result in a rate less than
12 the previous rate. If a claim has been accepted on an aggravation basis under section
13 65-05-15 and the claimant is eligible for supplementary benefits, the claimant's supplementary
14 benefit must be proportionally calculated.

15 **SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.** Eligibility for the increased benefit rate pursuant to
16 the changes in subsection 1 of section 1 and in section 4 of this Act is prospective only,
17 beginning with the effective date of this Act. Injured workers receiving benefits under
18 subsection 1 of section 65-05-17 and also receiving supplementary benefits under section
19 65-05.2-02 are not eligible for the increased benefit rate provided in subsection 1 of section 1.