

RESOLUTION NUMBER 17-01

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ADDRESSING THE REEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS SYSTEM UNDER
THE ALASKA WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT**

WHEREAS, the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board (Board) is a public organization that is accountable through its members to the residents, the Legislature, and the Governor of Alaska;

WHEREAS, the Board acts as the lead state agency for adjudicating disputes under the Alaska Workers' Compensation Act (Act), to ensure quick, efficient, and fair payments of benefits to injured workers at a reasonable cost to employers;

WHEREAS, Alaska's workers' compensation premium rates are the 5th highest in the nation according to the October 2016 Oregon Workers' Compensation Premium Rate Ranking Summary;

WHEREAS, stay-at-work/early return-to-work programs reduce reemployment costs to employers and improve worker outcomes;

WHEREAS, the Act requires a reemployment benefits eligibility evaluation when an injured worker has been unable to work for 90 days, without regard to whether an evaluation is warranted at that time;

WHEREAS, retraining plans under the Act focus on the quickest option to return an injured worker to work regardless of interest in that vocational goal, and at a maximum plan cost of \$13,300;

WHEREAS, the maximum plan cost of \$13,300, which has not been adjusted since 2000, is often insufficient to create a plan that meets statutory requirements;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board respectfully requests that the Alaska State Legislature amend the Alaska Workers' Compensation Act to provide the following:

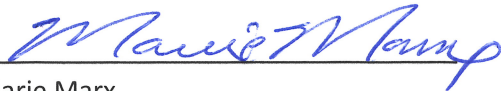
1. Transition from emphasis on retraining to emphasis on stay-at-work/early return-to-work.
2. Revise the 90-day mandatory reemployment evaluation under AS 23.30.041.
3. Increase eligibility evaluation time from 30 days to 60 days.
4. Provide a statutory provision allowing reconsideration of the RBA's decision within 30 days of the decision.
5. Provide a statutory provision allowing modification of the RBA's decision within one year if circumstances have changed.
6. Transition from reemployment plans of shortest duration to plans that consider the injured worker's interests and experience, within statutory cost and duration limits.

7. Authorize the Board to establish fees for reemployment specialist services.
8. Increase the benefit under .041(l) from \$13,300 to \$19,300, and adjust to cpi annually.
9. Extend the timeframe to select a job dislocation benefit.
10. Establish a method for injured workers to voluntarily exit the reemployment benefits system.
11. Allow an employer to controvert reemployment benefits based on noncooperation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of the Resolution be promptly transmitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and the Chairman of the Senate and House Labor and Commerce Committees.

CERTIFICATION

The Alaska Workers' Compensation Board held a meeting duly and regularly called, noticed, and convened this 6th day of October, 2017, and the foregoing Resolution was signed and adopted at said meeting.



Marie Marx,
Chair



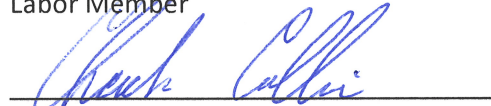
Stacy Allen,
Labor Member



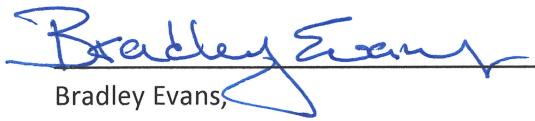
Brad Austin,
Labor Member



Pamela Cline,
Labor Member



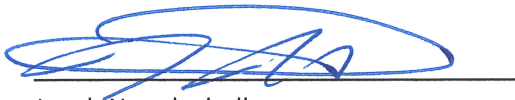
Chuck Collins,
Industry Member



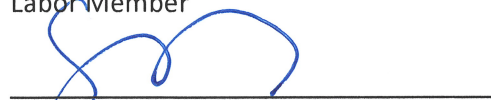
Bradley Evans,
Industry Member

ABSENT

David Kester,
Industry Member



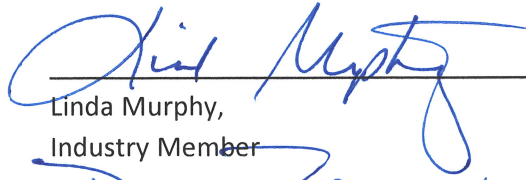
Jacob Howdeshell,
Labor Member



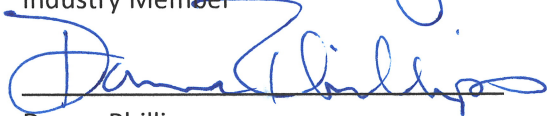
Sarah Lefebvre,
Industry Member

ABSENT

Saleutogi Letuligasenoa,
Industry Member



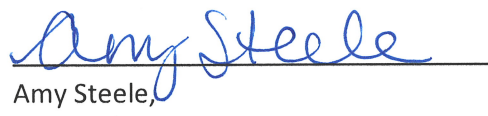
Linda Murphy,
Industry Member



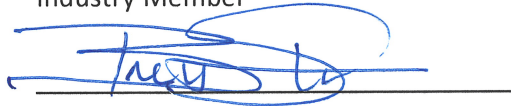
Donna Phillips,
Labor Member

ABSENT

Aaron Plikat,
Labor Member



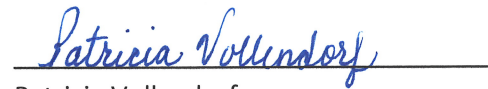
Amy Steele,
Industry Member



Brett Stubbs,
Industry Member

ABSENT

Rick Traini,
Labor Member



Patricia Vollendorf,
Labor Member



Robert Weel,
Industry Member

ABSENT

Lake Williams,
Labor Member