

Sixty-first
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1408

Introduced by

Representatives Ruby, Clark, Kasper

Senator Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new chapter to title 65 of the North Dakota Century
2 Code, relating to allowing employers to purchase private insurance or self-insure for workers'
3 compensation coverage.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** A new chapter to title 65 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and
6 enacted as follows:

7 **Duty to secure payment of compensation - Options - Definition.**

8 1. Notwithstanding contrary provisions of law, every employer required to provide
9 workers' compensation coverage under this title shall secure the coverage under
10 this title by:

- 11 a. Paying premiums and providing coverage through the state fund;
12 b. Providing coverage and qualifying as a self-insured employer under this title;
13 or
14 c. Providing coverage and qualifying as a carrier-insured employer under this
15 title.

16 2. As used in this chapter:

- 17 a. "Carrier-insured employer" means an employer that provides workers'
18 compensation coverage through a guaranty contract insurer.
19 b. "Guaranty contract insurer" means an insurer that is authorized under titles
20 26.1 and 65 to transact workers' compensation insurance in this state. An
21 insurer may not be authorized to transact workers' compensation insurance in
22 this state unless the insurer's policy provides workers' compensation
23 coverage that meets or exceeds the coverage required under title 65.

- 1 c. "Self-insurer" means an employer or group of employers that has been
2 authorized under this chapter to carry its own liability to its employees
3 covered by this title.

4 **Carrier-insured employers.**

- 5 1. An employer may qualify as a carrier-insured employer by establishing to the
6 insurance commissioner's satisfaction that the employer is insured by a guaranty
7 contract insurer. A carrier-insured employer must have proof of insurance filed
8 with the insurance department.
- 9 2. The insurance department may suspend or revoke the authorization of an insurer
10 to issue workers' compensation insurance policies in this state if the insurance
11 department finds the company failed to comply with the insurer's obligations under
12 this title or failed to comply with the orders of the insurance department.
- 13 3. The insurance department shall adopt rules addressing:
- 14 a. Proof of insurance requirements;
- 15 b. Guaranty contract expiration, cancellation, and termination requirements for
16 carrier-insured employers; and
- 17 c. Insurance department revocation of authorization to be a carrier-insured
18 employer.

19 **Qualification - Self-insurers.**

- 20 1. An employer may qualify as a self-insurer by establishing to the insurance
21 commissioner's satisfaction that the employer has sufficient financial ability to
22 make certain the prompt payment of all compensation under this title and all
23 assessments that may become due from such employer. Each application for
24 certification as a self-insurer submitted by an employer must be accompanied by
25 payment of a fee of one hundred fifty dollars or such larger sum as the insurance
26 commissioner finds necessary for the administrative costs of evaluation of the
27 applicant's qualifications. Any employer that has formerly been certified as a
28 self-insurer and thereafter ceases to be so certified may not apply for certification
29 within three years of ceasing to have been so certified.
- 30 2. A self-insurer may be required by the insurance commissioner to supplement
31 existing financial ability by depositing in an escrow account in a depository

1 designated by the insurance commissioner, money or corporate or governmental
2 securities approved by the insurance commissioner or a surety bond written by any
3 company admitted to transact surety business in this state, or provide an
4 irrevocable letter of credit issued by a federally or state-chartered commercial
5 banking institution authorized to conduct business in this state filed with the
6 insurance department. The money, securities, bond, or letter of credit must be in
7 an amount reasonably sufficient in the insurance commissioner's discretion to
8 ensure payment of reasonably foreseeable compensation and assessments, but
9 not less than the employer's normal expected annual claim liabilities and in no
10 event less than one hundred thousand dollars. In arriving at the amount of money,
11 securities, bond, or letter of credit required under this subsection, the insurance
12 commissioner shall take into consideration the financial ability of the employer to
13 pay compensation and assessments and probable continuity of operation of the
14 self-insurer. However, a letter of credit is acceptable only if the self-insurer has a
15 net worth of not less than five hundred million dollars as evidenced in an annual
16 financial statement prepared by a qualified, independent auditor using generally
17 accepted accounting principles. The money, securities, bond, or letter of credit so
18 deposited must be held by the insurance commissioner solely for the payment of
19 compensation by the self-insurer and the self-insurer's assessments. In the event
20 of default, the self-insurer loses all right and title to, any interest in, and any right to
21 control the surety. The amount of surety may be increased or decreased from time
22 to time by the insurance commissioner. The income from any securities deposited
23 may be distributed currently to the self-insurer. The letter of credit option
24 authorized in this subsection does not apply to a self-insurer that is a hospital or a
25 political subdivision.

26 3. Securities or money deposited by an employer pursuant to subsection 2 must be
27 returned to the self-insurer upon the self-insurer's written request if the employer
28 files the bond required by subsection 2.

29 4. If the employer seeking to qualify as a self-insurer has previously insured with the
30 state fund, the insurance commissioner shall require the employer to make up the

- 1 employer's proper share of any deficit or insufficiency in the state fund as a
2 condition to certification as a self-insurer.
- 3 5. A self-insurer may insure a portion of the self-insurer's liability under this title with
4 any insurer authorized to transact insurance in this state; however, the insurer may
5 not participate in the administration of the responsibilities of the self-insurer under
6 this title. The insurance may not exceed eighty percent of the liabilities under this
7 title.
- 8 6. For purposes of the application of this section, the insurance department may
9 adopt separate rules establishing the security requirements applicable to political
10 subdivisions. In setting the requirements, the insurance department shall take into
11 consideration the ability of the political subdivision to meet its self-insured
12 obligations, such as source of funds, permanency, and right of default.
- 13 7. The insurance commissioner shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this
14 section, including rules relating to the terms and conditions of letters of credit and
15 the establishment of the appropriate level of net worth of the self-insurer to qualify
16 for use of the letter of credit. Only letters of credit issued in strict compliance with
17 the rules may be deemed acceptable.

18 **Surety liability - Termination.**

- 19 1. The surety on a bond filed by a self-insurer under this chapter may terminate the
20 self-insurer's liability thereon by giving the insurance commissioner written notice
21 stating when, not less than thirty days thereafter, the termination will be effective.
- 22 2. In case of a termination, the surety shall remain liable, in accordance with the
23 terms of the bond, with respect to future compensation for injuries to employees of
24 the self-insurer occurring before the termination of the surety's liability.
- 25 3. If the bond is terminated for any reason other than the employer terminating the
26 employer's status as a self-insurer, the employer shall, before the date of
27 termination of the surety's liability, otherwise comply with the requirements of this
28 title.
- 29 4. The liability of a surety on any bond filed under this section must be released and
30 extinguished and the bond returned to the employer or surety if either the liability is

1 secured by another bond filed or money or securities deposited as required by this
2 chapter.

3 **Termination of status - Notice - Financial requirements.**

4 1. Any employer may at any time terminate the employer's status as a self-insurer by
5 giving the insurance commissioner written notice stating when, not less than thirty
6 days thereafter, the termination will be effective. The termination may not be
7 effective until the employer either has ceased to be an employer or has filed with
8 the insurance commissioner for state fund coverage under this title.

9 2. An employer that ceases to be a self-insurer, and which so files with the insurance
10 commissioner, shall maintain money, securities, or surety bonds deemed sufficient
11 in the insurance commissioner's discretion to cover the entire liability of the
12 employer for injuries or occupational diseases to the employer's employees which
13 occurred during the period of self-insurance; however, the insurance commissioner
14 may agree for the medical aid and accident funds to assume the obligation of the
15 claims, in whole or in part, and shall adjust the employer's premium rate to provide
16 for the payment of the obligations on behalf of the employer.

17 **Default by self-insurer - Authority of insurance commissioner - Liability for**
18 **reimbursement.**

19 1. The insurance commissioner, in cases of default upon any obligation under this
20 title by the self-insurer, after ten days' notice by certified mail to the defaulting
21 self-insurer of the intention to do so, may bring suit upon the bond or collect the
22 interest and principal of any of the securities as the securities become due, sell the
23 securities as may be required, or apply the money deposited to pay compensation
24 and discharge the obligations of the defaulting self-insurer under this title.

25 2. The insurance commissioner may fulfill the defaulting self-insured employer's
26 obligations under this title from the defaulting self-insured employer's deposit or
27 from other funds provided under this title for the satisfaction of claims against the
28 defaulting self-insured employer. The defaulting self-insured employer is liable to
29 and shall reimburse the insurance commissioner for the amounts necessary to
30 fulfill the obligations of the defaulting self-insured employer which are in excess of
31 the amounts received by the insurance commissioner from any bond filed or

1 securities or money deposited by the defaulting self-insured employer. The
2 amounts to be reimbursed must include all amounts paid or payable as
3 compensation under this title together with administrative costs, including
4 attorney's fees, and must be considered taxes due the insurance department.

5 **Self-insurers' insolvency trust - Assessments - Rules.**

- 6 1. A self-insurers' insolvency trust is established to provide for the unsecured benefits
7 paid to the injured employees of self-insured employers under this title for insolvent
8 or defaulting self-insured employers and for the associated administrative costs of
9 the insurance department, including attorney's fees. The self-insurers' insolvency
10 trust must be funded by an insolvency assessment that must be levied on a
11 postinsolvency basis and after the defaulting self-insured employer's security
12 deposit, assets, and reinsurance, if any, have been exhausted. Insolvency
13 assessments must be imposed on all self-insured employers, except political
14 subdivisions. The manner of imposing and collecting assessments to the
15 insolvency fund must be set forth in rules adopted by the insurance department to
16 ensure that a self-insured employer pays into the fund in proportion to the
17 employer's claim costs. The rules must provide that a self-insured employer that
18 has surrendered the employer's certification must be assessed for a period of not
19 more than three calendar years following the termination date of the certification.
- 20 2. The insurance commissioner shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this
21 section, including:
- 22 a. Governing the formation of the self-insurers' insolvency trust for the purpose
23 of this chapter;
- 24 b. Governing the insurance department and operation of the self-insurers'
25 insolvency trust to assure compliance with the requirements of this chapter;
- 26 c. Requiring adequate accountability of the collection and disbursement of funds
27 in the self-insurers' insolvency trust; and
- 28 d. Any other provisions necessary to carry out the requirements of this chapter.

29 **Payments upon default.** If compensation due under this title is not paid because of an
30 uncorrected default of a self-insurer, compensation must be paid from the workforce safety and
31 insurance fund, and any moneys obtained by the insurance commissioner from the bonds or

1 other security provided under this chapter must be deposited in the fund for the payment of
2 compensation and administrative costs, including attorney's fees.

3 **Default lien.**

- 4 1. In all cases of probate, insolvency, assignment for the benefit of creditors, or
5 bankruptcy, the claim of the state for the amounts necessary to fulfill the
6 obligations of a defaulting self-insured employer together with administrative costs
7 and attorney's fees is a lien prior to all other liens or claims and on a parity with
8 prior tax liens. The existence of a default by a self-insured employer is sufficient to
9 create the lien without any prior or subsequent action by the insurance department.
10 All administrators, receivers, and assignees for the benefit of creditors shall notify
11 the insurance commissioner of the administration, receivership, or assignment
12 within thirty days of appointment or qualification.
- 13 2. Separate and apart and in addition to the lien established by this section, the
14 insurance commissioner may issue an assessment, for the amount necessary to
15 fulfill the defaulting self-insured employer's obligations, including all amounts paid
16 and payable as compensation under this title and administrative costs, including
17 attorney's fees.

18 **Corrective action against employer authorized - Appeal.**

- 19 1. The insurance commissioner shall take corrective action against a self-insured
20 employer if the insurance commissioner determines:
- 21 a. The employer is not following proper workers' compensation insurance claims
22 procedures;
- 23 b. The employer's accident prevention program is inadequate; or
- 24 c. Any condition as established by rule exists.
- 25 2. Corrective actions may be taken upon the insurance commissioner's initiative or in
26 response to a petition filed. Corrective actions that may be taken by the insurance
27 commissioner include:
- 28 a. Probationary certification for a period of time determined by the insurance
29 commissioner;
- 30 b. Mandatory training for employers in areas including claims management,
31 safety procedures, and administrative reporting requirements; and

- 1 c. Monitoring of the activities of the employer to determine progress toward
2 compliance.
- 3 3. Upon the termination of the corrective action, the insurance commissioner shall
4 review the employer's program for compliance with state laws and rules. A written
5 report regarding the employer's compliance must be provided to the employer and
6 to any party to a petition filed. If the insurance commissioner determines that
7 compliance has been attained, no further action may be taken. If compliance has
8 not been attained, the insurance commissioner may take additional corrective
9 action or proceed toward decertification.
- 10 **Request for claim resolution - Time.** The self-insurer shall request allowance or
11 denial of a claim within sixty days from the date the claim is filed. If the self-insurer fails to act
12 within sixty days, the insurance department shall intervene and adjudicate the claim.