

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 self-insure for workers' compensation coverage.

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

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

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

7 1. Notwithstanding contrary provisions of law, every employer under this title shall
8 secure the payment of compensation under this title by insuring and keeping
9 insured the payment of such benefits with the state fund or qualifying as a
10 self-insurer under this chapter.

11 2. As used in this chapter, "self-insurer" means an employer or group of employers
12 that has been authorized under this chapter to carry its own liability to its
13 employees covered by this title.

14 **Qualification.**

15 1. An employer may qualify as a self-insurer by establishing to the director's
16 satisfaction that the employer has sufficient financial ability to make certain the
17 prompt payment of all compensation under this title and all assessments that may
18 become due from such employer. Each application for certification as a
19 self-insurer submitted by an employer must be accompanied by payment of a fee
20 of one hundred fifty dollars or such larger sum as the director finds necessary for
21 the administrative costs of evaluation of the applicant's qualifications. Any
22 employer that has formerly been certified as a self-insurer and thereafter ceases to
23 be so certified may not apply for certification within three years of ceasing to have
24 been so certified.

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

- 1 proper share of any deficit or insufficiency in the state fund as a condition to
2 certification as a self-insurer.
- 3 5. A self-insurer may reinsure a portion of the self-insurer's liability under this title with
4 any reinsurer authorized to transact reinsurance in this state; however, the
5 reinsurer may not participate in the administration of the responsibilities of the
6 self-insurer under this title. The reinsurance may not exceed eighty percent of the
7 liabilities under this title.
- 8 6. For purposes of the application of this section, the organization may adopt
9 separate rules establishing the security requirements applicable to political
10 subdivisions. In setting the requirements, the organization 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 director shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this section, including
14 rules relating to the terms and conditions of letters of credit and the establishment
15 of the appropriate level of net worth of the self-insurer to qualify for use of the letter
16 of credit. Only letters of credit issued in strict compliance with the rules may be
17 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 director written notice stating when, not
21 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 director written notice stating when, not less than thirty days thereafter,
6 the termination will be effective. The termination may not be effective until the
7 employer either has ceased to be an employer or has filed with the director for
8 state fund coverage under this title.

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

17 **Default by self-insurer - Authority of director - Liability for reimbursement.**

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

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

1 paid or payable as compensation under this title together with administrative costs,
2 including attorney's fees, and must be considered taxes due the organization.

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

4 1. A self-insurers' insolvency trust is established to provide for the unsecured benefits
5 paid to the injured employees of self-insured employers under this title for insolvent
6 or defaulting self-insured employers and for the associated administrative costs of
7 the organization, including attorney's fees. The self-insurers' insolvency trust must
8 be funded by an insolvency assessment that must be levied on a postinsolvency
9 basis and after the defaulting self-insured employer's security deposit, assets, and
10 reinsurance, if any, have been exhausted. Insolvency assessments must be
11 imposed on all self-insured employers, except political subdivisions. The manner
12 of imposing and collecting assessments to the insolvency fund must be set forth in
13 rules adopted by the organization to ensure that a self-insured employer pays into
14 the fund in proportion to the employer's claim costs. The rules must provide that a
15 self-insured employer that has surrendered the employer's certification must be
16 assessed for a period of not more than three calendar years following the
17 termination date of the certification.

18 2. The director shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this section, including:
19 a. Governing the formation of the self-insurers' insolvency trust for the purpose
20 of this chapter;
21 b. Governing the organization and operation of the self-insurers' insolvency trust
22 to assure compliance with the requirements of this chapter;
23 c. Requiring adequate accountability of the collection and disbursement of funds
24 in the self-insurers' insolvency trust; and
25 d. Any other provisions necessary to carry out the requirements of this chapter.

26 **Payments upon default.** If compensation due under this title is not paid because of an
27 uncorrected default of a self-insurer, compensation must be paid from the workforce safety and
28 insurance fund, and any moneys obtained by the director from the bonds or other security
29 provided under this chapter must be deposited in the fund for the payment of compensation and
30 administrative costs, including attorney's fees.

31 **Default lien.**

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

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

- 15 1. The director shall take corrective action against a self-insured employer if the
16 director determines:
- 17 a. The employer is not following proper workers' compensation insurance claims
18 procedures;
- 19 b. The employer's accident prevention program is inadequate; or
- 20 c. Any condition as established by rule exists.
- 21 2. Corrective actions may be taken upon the director's initiative or in response to a
22 petition filed. Corrective actions that may be taken by the director include:
- 23 a. Probationary certification for a period of time determined by the director;
24 b. Mandatory training for employers in areas including claims management,
25 safety procedures, and administrative reporting requirements; and
- 26 c. Monitoring of the activities of the employer to determine progress toward
27 compliance.
- 28 3. Upon the termination of the corrective action, the director shall review the
29 employer's program for compliance with state laws and rules. A written report
30 regarding the employer's compliance must be provided to the employer and to any
31 party to a petition filed. If the director determines that compliance has been

1 attained, no further action may be taken. If compliance has not been attained, the
2 director may take additional corrective action or proceed toward decertification.
3 **Request for claim resolution - Time.** The self-insurer shall request allowance or
4 denial of a claim within sixty days from the date the claim is filed. If the self-insurer fails to act
5 within sixty days, the organization shall intervene and adjudicate the claim.