

Injured Employee Partial Permanent Disability Payment Working Group

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 16, 2023

12:00 PM in on Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 PM by Chairman, Rep. Conley

The following task force members were present:

Members: Ackert T. 008; Conley C. 040; Marie Gallo-Hall; Nathan Shafner;
Bud Drapeau; Brooke Foley; Kushner J. 024

Absent were: Bill Beckert; Colette Griffin; Sanchez E. 024; Joseph Passaretti;
Sampson R. S16; Colin Hoddinott; Quinn M. 082

Guests:

Remarks by the Chairs:

Representative Conley calls the meeting to order and welcomes everyone to the Injured Employee Partial Permanent Disability Payment Working Group meeting. She informs the working group that co-chair Quinn may join shortly.

Rep. Conley welcomes the members to today's meeting and informs them that some may be absent.

Approval of Minutes – January 2nd

Representative Conley asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2nd meeting. Motion made by Rep. Kushner, seconded by Brooke Foley. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Continued Discussion on Proposals

As Representative Conley begins the discussion, she asks the committee membership if they would like to present new proposals concurrently with last meeting's proposals/amendments to the statute.

Senator Kushner expresses her appreciation to those members who contributed to the revision of the statute. Since the 1993 amendments were implemented, so much has changed; this has been demonstrated in other areas of workers' compensation. It is her belief that the time has come for workers' compensation to be modernized.

In reviewing the minutes, Bud Drapeau notes that the group has reached somewhat of an agreement towards utilizing vocational rehabilitation more widely. He inquires with Marie Gallo- Hall about the status of Department of Workers Compensation (DWR) of current office staff.

Marie Gallo-Hall explains that there are few individuals who work with workers' compensation claimants. In fact, Karen Sargent visits the Oak Street location frequently with a new DWR employee.

Bud Drapeau states that his initial inquiry was prompted by his belief that there were only three DWR workers compensation employees.

Marie Gallo-Hall explains that former working group guest Karen Sargent is currently employed at DWR as a supervisor.

Representative Conley asks if Marie Gallo- Hall could acquire the current staff list.

In her response, Marie Gallo Hall states that she will obtain an answer from Karen Sargent.

Representative Conley informs the group that this will be the last opportunity for members to express their concerns before the final meeting. Afterwards, she asks if the group has any final thoughts to share.

Nate Shafner responds by saying that at the outset of the working group, they provided a broad outline of potential discussion topics. It is his belief that these proposed ideas have been interpreted as a "all or nothing" approach. He is concerned that no proposals, comments, or counter-responses have been offered to formulate a more agreeable outcome. It would be helpful if the proposal had served as a foundational blueprint to jumpstart discussion and generate new ideas so that the committee could reach an agreement. He explains that he is still open to engaging in this discussion before the last meeting.

Representative Ackert asks Representative Conley if the working group is intended for Representative Quinn and herself to engage in this topic during session.

Representative Conley agrees. It would be ideal for the working group to be able to submit a report to the Judiciary Committee by February 1, 2024.

Representative Ackert thanks Representative Conley for her comments.

Brooke Foley reiterates the position of the insurance industry. She feels that she has not been provided with concrete data or discussion regarding whether changes to workers' compensation benefit levels are necessary. She contends that her chart information was not discussed in this group and that no evidence has been presented to prove that CT's benefit levels are inadequate.

Bud Drapeau responds that Nate Shafner previously stated that the information they possess is primarily anecdotal. In addition, the insurance industry has access to statistical evidence. He feels that quantitative analysis should not be valued more than anecdotal evidence. He explains that the lives of the injured workers that they assist daily are important too.

Senator Kushner appreciates Bud Drapeau's remarks. She recalls public hearings that the labor committee has held on to partial permanent partial disabilities with other legislation under consideration. Those testimonies from injured workers were

compelling. She believes there have been many facets of evidence presented that are not solely anecdotal. Workers in these circumstances struggle to survive. We as a legislature, have an obligation to ensure that we assist and improve their quality of life.

In her closing remarks, Representative Conley discusses next steps. She concludes by stating that the final meeting will be held on January 30th from noon to two p.m., and there will be a proposal to be presented. Co-chair Conley encourages committee members to share additional proposals with the working group staff, and they will distribute them to the group. To be considered, new proposals must be submitted by Friday at 4 p.m.; thereafter, no new proposals will be accepted. All proposals will be reviewed by the chairs, discussed, and a proposal will be made to this working group. Voting will take place at the next meeting of the committee. It is possible for the chair to vote on one proposal or a combination of several proposals. She emphasizes that the purpose of this working group is to provide recommendations to the judiciary committee. She explains that legislation will not automatically be enacted based on the discussion.

Representative Conley adjourns today's meeting.

Announcement of Time and Date of Next Meeting:

Tuesday January 30th, at 12:00pm

Adjournment:

This meeting was adjourned at 12:19 PM

Nate Kalechman

Ana Allen

Task Force Administrator

Minutes Prepared by