

Minnesota Law Prohibits Forced Attendance at Employer-Sponsored Meetings Concerning Religious or Political Matters

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On May 24, 2023, Governor Tim Walz signed into law legislation that adds a new section to the labor and employment law of Minnesota to prohibit employers from taking adverse employment action against employees who decline to attend employer-sponsored meetings regarding religious or political matters.

Quick Hits

- The law prohibits employers from taking or threatening to take any adverse employment action against employees who decline to attend employer-sponsored meetings concerning religious or political matters.
- Employers must post a notice of employees' rights under this new law by August 1, 2023.
- The law does not prohibit legally required communications between employers and employees, or employees' voluntary participation at the meetings.
- Employees may bring a civil action within ninety days of the date of an alleged violation.

Specifically, this new statute (Minn. Stat. § 181.531), which was included in the [omnibus jobs, economic development, and labor funding bill](#) (Senate File 3035), prohibits an employer from discharging, disciplining, threatening to discharge or discipline, or penalizing an employee, for the following reasons or purposes:

1. because the employee declines to attend or participate in an employer-sponsored meeting or declines to receive or listen to communications from the employer ... if the meeting or communication is to communicate the opinion of the employer about

religious or political matters;

2. as a means of inducing an employee to attend or participate in meetings or receive or listen to communications described above; or
3. because the employee ... makes a good-faith report ... of a violation or a suspected violation of the statute.

The law does not:

1. prohibit communications of information that the employer is required by law to communicate;
2. limit the rights of an employer ... to conduct meetings involving religious or political matters so long as attendance is wholly voluntary or to engage in communications so long as receipt or listening is wholly voluntary; or
3. limit the rights of an employer ... from communicating to its employees any information, or requiring employee attendance at meetings and other events, that is necessary for the employees to perform their lawfully required job duties.

The law defines both “political matters” and “religious matters” fairly broadly. For the purpose of this section, “political matters” means “matters relating to elections for political office, political parties, proposals to change legislation, proposals to change regulations, proposals to change public policy, and the decision to join or support any political party or political, civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization.” “Religious matters” is defined as “matters relating to religious belief, affiliation, and practice and the decision to join or support any religious organization or association.”

Employer Notice

Employers must post and keep posted a notice of employees’ rights under this law within thirty days of the law’s effective date of August 1, 2023. Employers must post the notice where notices are “customarily placed.”

Employee Remedies

An aggrieved employee may bring a civil action within ninety days of the date of an alleged violation. The court may award “all appropriate relief,” including injunctive relief, reinstatement, eligible seniority, back pay, and other benefits. The court may also award a prevailing employee his or her reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs.

Ogletree Deakins’ [Minneapolis](#) office will continue to monitor developments and will provide updates on the [Minnesota](#) blog as additional information becomes available.

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