

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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118th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1997

Legislative Document

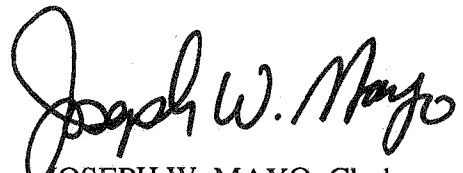
No. 1192

H.P. 875

House of Representatives, February 25, 1997

An Act to Provide Adjustments to Accommodate Increases in the Cost of Living for Injured Workers.

Reference to the Committee on Labor suggested and ordered printed.


JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative SAMSON of Jay.
Cosponsored by Representatives: BAKER of Bangor, BERRY of Livermore, GAGNE of Buckfield, HATCH of Skowhegan, RINES of Wiscasset, STANLEY of Medway, VOLENIK of Brooklin, WRIGHT of Berwick.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

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Sec. 1. 39-A MRSA §212, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1991, c. 885, Pt. A, §8 and affected by §§9 to 11, is amended to read:

1. Total incapacity. While the incapacity for work resulting from the injury is total, the employer shall pay the injured employee a weekly compensation equal to 80% of the employee's after-tax average weekly wage, but not more than the maximum benefit under section 211. Compensation must be paid for the duration of the incapacity.

The compensation must be adjusted annually so that it continues to bear the same percentage relationship to the state average weekly wage, as computed by the Maine Unemployment Insurance Commission, as the compensation compared to the state average weekly wage at the time of the injury.

Any employee who is able to perform full-time remunerative work in the ordinary competitive labor market in the State, regardless of the availability of such work in and around that employee's community, is not eligible for compensation under this section, but may be eligible for compensation under section 213.

Sec. 2. 39-A MRSA §213, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1991, c. 885, Pt. A, §8 and affected by §§9 to 11, is amended to read:

1. Benefit and duration. While the incapacity for work is partial, the employer shall pay the injured employee a weekly compensation equal to 80% of the difference between the injured employee's after-tax average weekly wage before the personal injury and the after-tax average weekly wage that the injured employee is able to earn after the injury, but not more than the maximum benefit under section 211. Compensation must be paid for the duration of the disability if the employee's permanent impairment, determined according to the impairment guidelines adopted by the board pursuant to section 153, subsection 8 resulting from the personal injury is in excess of 15% to the body. In all other cases an employee is not eligible to receive compensation under this section after the employee has received 260 weeks of compensation under section 212, subsection 1, this section or both. The board may in the exercise of its discretion extend the duration of benefit entitlement beyond 260 weeks in cases involving extreme financial hardship due to inability to return to gainful employment. This authority may not be delegated to a hearing officer and such decisions must be made expeditiously. This compensation must be adjusted annually so that it continues to bear the same percentage relationship to the state average weekly wage, as computed by the Maine Unemployment

2 Insurance Commission, as the compensation compared to the state
3 average weekly wage at the time of the injury.

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5 SUMMARY

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7 This bill requires an annual adjustment to workers'
8 compensation benefits so that disability benefits will keep pace
9 with cost-of-living increases.

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