

SB 131
SPONSOR STATEMENT
A Senate Labor and Commerce bill

Title: An act amending the Alaska Wage and Hour Act as it relates to the employment of a person acting in a supervisory capacity; providing definitions for persons employed in administrative, executive and professional capacities, for persons working in the capacity of an outside salesman, and for persons working in the capacity of a salesman employed on a straight commission basis.

Alaska's Wage and Hour Act (AS 23.10.050-23.10.150) establishes the provisions for overtime compensation. AS 23.10.055 sets forth exemptions to the Wage and Hour Act. One of these exemptions is "an individual employed in a bona fide executive, administrative or professional capacity or in the capacity of an outside salesman or a salesman who is employed on a straight commission basis."

As currently defined in our administrative code, the definitions of "executive capacity," "administrative capacity," and "professional capacity" are confusing and difficult to interpret. In order to determine if someone is an executive, administrative or professional employee, you have to use what is known as the "long test." In addition to numerous other factors, the long test includes a calculation of the employee's time spent on "non-exempt work" (i.e. work that is not executive, administrative or professional). If an employee spends more than 20 percent (40 percent in retail or service establishments) of their time on non-exempt work, they become subject to the Wage and Hour Act and can qualify for overtime. The ambiguity within the definitions, including the implementation of the 80/20 test, has led to numerous wage and hour lawsuits, causing great expense to employers and employees.

SB 131 deletes the 80/20 test and sets forth definitions which are much more understandable. The simplicity provided by the new definitions will lead to greater compliance with the statutes. It is in the best interests of both the employer and employee that the statutes are straightforward, practical and easy to follow.

SB 131 also clarifies another area of confusion in the Wage and Hour provisions. Currently, a person acting in a "supervisory capacity" is exempt from payment of overtime, but not exempt from the full Wage and Hour Act. The definition of "supervisory capacity" in the regulations is also ambiguous and difficult to interpret. SB 131 removes this exemption from the statute. There are two reasons for deletion of the provision. The first reason is that due to the uncertainty in interpretation of the definition, the statute is currently unworkable. Secondly, the new definitions of "executive capacity" and "administrative capacity" would subsume a person working in a supervisory capacity. Therefore, there is no need to have a separate provision.

Enacting this bill will eliminate ambiguities, align Alaska more closely with other states and reduce the number of frivolous lawsuits, while protecting workers' rights to receive overtime.