

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed prior to this session of the General Assembly.

1 State of Arkansas
2 85th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2005
4

As Engrossed: H2/18/05 H2/21/05

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1598

5 By: Representatives Wood, Roebuck, Adcock, Boyd, Bright, D. Creekmore, Dickinson, Dunn, L. Evans,
6 George, R. Green, J. Johnson, Mack, Medley, Overbey, Pate, S. Prater, Pyle, Ragland, Reep, Rosenbaum,
7 Thompson, Thyer, Walters
8 By: Senators Broadway, Higginbothom, Hill, J. Jeffress, T. Smith, Whitaker, *Altes*

For An Act To Be Entitled

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10
11 AN ACT TO DECLARE THAT A PERSON SHALL NOT BE
12 DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE OF MILITARY
13 SERVICE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
14

Subtitle

15
16 THE MILITARY SERVICE PROTECTION ACT.
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20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
21

22 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 12, Chapter 62 is amended to add an
23 additional subchapter to read as follows:

24 12-62-801. Title.

25 This subchapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Military
26 Service Protection Act".

27
28 12-62-802. Definitions.

29 For the purposes of this subchapter:

30 (1)(A) "Back pay" means the amount of compensation that an
31 employee would have earned if the employer had not engaged in conduct
32 prohibited under this subchapter.

33 (B) "Back pay" shall not include any compensation that
34 would have been earned before two (2) years from the date that the cause of
35 action permitted under this subchapter is initially filed;

36 (2) "Compensatory damages" means damages for:



1 (A) Back pay and interest on back pay;

2 (B) Mental anguish;

3 (C) Loss of dignity; or

4 (D) Other intangible injuries;

5 (3)(A) "Employee" means a person who performs work or service of
6 any type for compensation on a full-time or part-time basis.

7 (B) "Employee" includes applicants for positions to
8 perform work or service for compensation.

9 (C) "Employee" does not include:

10 (i) Any individual employed by his or her parents,
11 spouse, or child;

12 (ii) An individual participating in a specialized
13 employment training program conducted by a nonprofit sheltered workshop or
14 rehabilitation facility;

15 (iii) An individual employed outside the State of
16 Arkansas; or

17 (iv) An independent contractor;

18 (4) "Employer" means a person or entity who employs five (5) or
19 more employees in the State of Arkansas in each of twenty (20) or more
20 calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year before the cause of
21 action arose, or any agent of such person;

22 (5) "Military service" means past or present honorable service
23 in any active or reserve component of the United States Armed Forces; and

24 (6) "Religious organization" means a church or other place of
25 worship that:

26 (A) Is located in the state; and

27 (B) Provides religious services to its congregation.

28
29 12-62-803. Applicability.

30 (a) The provisions of this subchapter relating to employment shall not
31 be applicable with respect to employment by a religious organization or other
32 religious entity.

33 (b)(1) This subchapter shall not be applicable to any of the
34 following:

35 (A) The State of Arkansas;

36 (B) A state agency;

1 (C) A political subdivision;

2 (D) A city of the first class, a city of the second class,
3 or an incorporated town;

4 (E) A county;

5 (F) A school district;

6 (G) A public official; or

7 (H) An agency, commission, board, committee, council, or
8 department of any of the entities stated in subdivision (b)(1) of this
9 section.

10 (2) This subchapter shall not be construed as creating a cause
11 of action against an entity stated in subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

12 (b) This subchapter shall not apply to matters regulated by the
13 Arkansas Insurance Code or the Trade Practices Act, § 23-66-201 et seq.

14

15 12-62-804. Construction.

16 (a) Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to waive the
17 sovereign immunity of the State of Arkansas.

18 (b)(1) When construing this subchapter as it relates to employment
19 matters, a court may look for guidance to the Uniformed Services Employment
20 and Reemployment Rights Act, as amended and codified in 38 U.S.C. § 4301 et
21 seq., and as in effect on January 1, 2005, as well as federal decisions
22 interpreting this law.

23 (2) When construing this subchapter as it relates to all other
24 matters, a court may look for guidance to state and federal decisions
25 interpreting the federal Civil Rights Act of 1871, as amended and codified in
26 42 U.S.C. § 1983, as in effect on January 1, 2005.

27

28 12-62-805. Rights stated -- Cause of action created.

29 (a)(1) The right of an otherwise qualified person to be free from
30 discrimination because of military service is recognized as and declared to
31 be a civil right.

32 (2) This right shall include, but not be limited to:

33 (A) The right to obtain and hold employment without
34 discrimination;

35 (B) The right to the full enjoyment of any of the
36 accommodations, advantages, facilities, or privileges of any place of public

1 resort, accommodation, assemblage, or amusement;

2 (C) The right to engage in property transactions without
3 discrimination;

4 (D) The right to engage in credit and other contractual
5 transactions without discrimination; and

6 (E) The right to vote and participate fully in the
7 political process.

8 (b) A person who is injured by an intentional act of discrimination in
9 violation of subsection (a) of this section may bring a civil action in a
10 circuit court of competent jurisdiction.

11 (c)(1) An employee who is discriminated against by an employer in
12 violation of subdivision (a)(2)(A) of this section may bring a civil action
13 in a circuit court of competent jurisdiction.

14 (2) The employee may seek back pay and interest on back pay in
15 addition to the other remedies provided for under this section.

16 (d)(1) Subject to the limitations on damages in subdivision (d)(2) of
17 this section, a person may seek the following relief for a violation of a
18 civil right under this subchapter:

19 (A) An order prohibiting the discriminatory practice;

20 (B) Affirmative relief from the effects of the practice,
21 including, but not limited to, reemployment;

22 (C) An injunction to enjoin further violations;

23 (D) An order to recover compensatory and punitive damages;

24 and

25 (E) An order to recover the cost of litigation and a
26 reasonable attorney's fee, in the discretion of the court.

27 (2) The total compensatory and punitive damages awarded under
28 this section shall not exceed:

29 (A) The sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) in the
30 case of an employer who employs no less than five (5) but fewer than fifteen
31 (15) employees in each of twenty (20) or more calendar weeks in the current
32 or preceding calendar year before the cause of action arose;

33 (B) The sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in the
34 case of an employer who employs more than fourteen (14) but fewer than one
35 hundred one (101) employees in each of twenty (20) or more calendar weeks in
36 the current or preceding calendar year before the cause of action arose;

1 (C) The sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in
2 the case of an employer who employs more than one hundred (100) but fewer
3 than two hundred one (201) employees in each of twenty (20) or more calendar
4 weeks in the current or preceding calendar year before the cause of action
5 arose;

6 (D) The sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in
7 the case of an employer who employs more than two hundred (200) but fewer
8 than five hundred one (501) employees in each of twenty (20) or more calendar
9 weeks in the current or preceding calendar year before the cause of action
10 arose; and

11 (E) The sum of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000)
12 in the case of an employer who employs more than five hundred (500) employees
13 in each of twenty (20) or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding
14 calendar year before the cause of action arose.

15
16 12-62-806. Limitation of action.

17 (a) Except as provided under subsection (b) of this section, an action
18 under this section shall be brought within one (1) year after the alleged
19 violation or discriminatory conduct occurs.

20 (b) However, if a service member is deployed for active duty at any
21 time during the one (1) year period, then an action under this section shall
22 be brought within one (1) year after the end of his or her mobilization.

23
24 12-62-807. Retaliation – Interference – Remedies.

25 (a) It is unlawful under this subchapter for a person or entity to
26 retaliate or discriminate against a person because the person, in good faith:

27 (1) Opposed any act or practice made unlawful under this
28 subchapter; or

29 (2) Made a claim, testified, assisted, or participated in any
30 manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this subchapter.

31 (b) It is unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with
32 a person in his or her exercise of any rights granted or protected under this
33 subchapter.

34 (c) A person may avail himself or herself to the same procedures and
35 remedies available under § 12-62-805 for violations of this section.

36

1 12-62-808. Defenses.

2 (a) It is a defense under this subchapter if an employer establishes
3 that the employer's actions were based on legitimate, nondiscriminatory
4 factors and not on reasons related to military service.

5 (b) Provided the conduct at issue is based on a bona fide business
6 judgment and is not a pretext for discrimination that is prohibited under
7 this subchapter, this subchapter shall not be construed to prohibit or
8 restrict:

9 (1) An insurer, hospital, medical service company, health
10 maintenance organization, or any agent or entity that administers benefit
11 plans, or any bank, savings and loan, or other lender from underwriting
12 insurance or lending risks or administering such risks that are based on or
13 are not inconsistent with federal or state law;

14 (2) A person covered by this subchapter from establishing,
15 sponsoring, observing, or administering the terms of a bona fide benefit plan
16 that are based on underwriting risks, classifying risks, or administering
17 such risks that are based on or are not inconsistent with federal or state
18 law; or

19 (3) A person covered by this subchapter from establishing,
20 sponsoring, observing, or administering the terms of a bona fide benefit plan
21 that is not subject to federal or state laws which regulate insurance.

22
23 SECTION 2. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the
24 General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that since September 11, 2001, the
25 country has an increased need for soldiers to protect against terrorist acts
26 and threats to our national security posed by other countries; that members
27 of the National Guard and Reserves risk their lives to protect and defend our
28 country at home and abroad; that military service is honorable and citizens
29 who choose to serve their country deserve respect and to be treated fairly;
30 that members of the National Guard and Reserves are being denied employment
31 and being discriminated against in other ways because of their status as
32 soldiers; and that this act is immediately necessary to protect the citizens
33 who choose to honor their country by serving in the military from being
34 denied employment or being discriminated against in other ways because of
35 their military service. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist and
36 this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public

1 peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:
2 (1) The date of its approval by the Governor;
3 (2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor,
4 the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the
5 bill; or
6 (3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is
7 overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.

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/s/ Wood, et al