

91A.10 Settlement of claims and suits for wages — prohibition against discharge of employee.

1. Upon the written complaint of the employee involved, the commissioner may determine whether wages have not been paid and may constitute an enforceable claim. If for any reason the commissioner decides not to make such determination, the commissioner shall so notify the complaining employee within fourteen days of receipt of the complaint. The commissioner shall otherwise notify the employee of such determination within a reasonable time and if it is determined that there is an enforceable claim, the commissioner shall, with the consent of the complaining employee, take an assignment in trust for the wages and for any claim for liquidated damages without being bound by any of the technical rules respecting the validity of the assignment. However, the commissioner shall not accept any complaint for unpaid wages and liquidated damages after one year from the date the wages became due and payable.

2. The commissioner, with the assistance of the office of the attorney general if the commissioner requests such assistance, shall, unless a settlement is reached under this subsection, commence a civil action in any court of competent jurisdiction to recover for the benefit of any employee any wage, expenses, and liquidated damages' claims that have been assigned to the commissioner for recovery. The commissioner may also request reasonable and necessary attorney fees. With the consent of the assigning employee, the commissioner may also settle a claim on behalf of the assigning employee. Proceedings under this subsection and subsection 1 that precede commencement of a civil action shall be conducted informally without any party having a right to be heard before the commissioner. The commissioner may join various assignments in one claim for the purpose of settling or litigating their claims.

3. The provisions of subsections 1 and 2 shall not be construed to prevent an employee from settling or bringing an action for damages under section 91A.8 if the employee has not assigned the claim under subsection 1.

4. Any recovery of attorney fees, in the case of actions brought under this section by the commissioner, shall be remitted by the commissioner to the treasurer of state for deposit in the general fund of the state. Also, the commissioner shall not be required to pay any filing fee or other court costs.

5. An employer shall not discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because the employee has filed a complaint, assigned a claim, or brought an action under this section or has cooperated in bringing any action against an employer. Any employee may file a complaint with the commissioner alleging discharge or discrimination within thirty days after such violation occurs. Upon receipt of the complaint, the commissioner shall cause an investigation to be made to the extent deemed appropriate. If the commissioner determines from the investigation that the provisions of this subsection have been violated, the commissioner shall bring an action in the appropriate district court against such person. The district court shall have jurisdiction, for cause shown, to restrain violations of this subsection and order all appropriate relief including rehiring or reinstatement of the employee to the former position with back pay.

[C77, 79, 81, §91A.10]

84 Acts, ch 1270, §3; 90 Acts, ch 1136, §9

Referred to in §91A.3, 91A.6