

Public Law 100-379
100th Congress

An Act

Aug. 4, 1988
[S. 2527]

To require advance notification of plant closings and mass layoffs, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Worker
Adjustment and
Retraining
Notification Act.
Business and
industry.
Employment
and
unemployment.
29 USC 2101
note.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. Definitions; exclusions from definition of loss of employment.
- Sec. 3. Notice required before plant closings and mass layoffs.
- Sec. 4. Exemptions.
- Sec. 5. Administration and enforcement of requirements.
- Sec. 6. Procedures in addition to other rights of employees.
- Sec. 7. Procedures encouraged where not required.
- Sec. 8. Authority to prescribe regulations.
- Sec. 9. Effect on other laws.
- Sec. 10. Report on employment and international competitiveness.
- Sec. 11. Effective date.

29 USC 2101.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS; EXCLUSIONS FROM DEFINITION OF LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—As used in this Act—

(1) the term “employer” means any business enterprise that employs—

(A) 100 or more employees, excluding part-time employees; or

(B) 100 or more employees who in the aggregate work at least 4,000 hours per week (exclusive of hours of overtime);

(2) the term “plant closing” means the permanent or temporary shutdown of a single site of employment, or one or more facilities or operating units within a single site of employment, if the shutdown results in an employment loss at the single site of employment during any 30-day period for 50 or more employees excluding any part-time employees;

(3) the term “mass layoff” means a reduction in force which—

(A) is not the result of a plant closing; and

(B) results in an employment loss at the single site of employment during any 30-day period for—

(i)(I) at least 33 percent of the employees (excluding any part-time employees); and

(II) at least 50 employees (excluding any part-time employees); or

(ii) at least 500 employees (excluding any part-time employees);

(4) the term “representative” means an exclusive representative of employees within the meaning of section 9(a) or 8(f) of the National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. 159(a), 158(f)) or section 2 of the Railway Labor Act (45 U.S.C. 152);

(5) the term "affected employees" means employees who may reasonably be expected to experience an employment loss as a consequence of a proposed plant closing or mass layoff by their employer;

(6) subject to subsection (b), the term "employment loss" means (A) an employment termination, other than a discharge for cause, voluntary departure, or retirement, (B) a layoff exceeding 6 months, or (C) a reduction in hours of work of more than 50 percent during each month of any 6-month period;

(7) the term "unit of local government" means any general purpose political subdivision of a State which has the power to levy taxes and spend funds, as well as general corporate and police powers; and

(8) the term "part-time employee" means an employee who is employed for an average of fewer than 20 hours per week or who has been employed for fewer than 6 of the 12 months preceding the date on which notice is required.

(b) **EXCLUSIONS FROM DEFINITION OF EMPLOYMENT LOSS.**—(1) In the case of a sale of part or all of an employer's business, the seller shall be responsible for providing notice for any plant closing or mass layoff in accordance with section 3 of this Act, up to and including the effective date of the sale. After the effective date of the sale of part or all of an employer's business, the purchaser shall be responsible for providing notice for any plant closing or mass layoff in accordance with section 3 of this Act. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, any person who is an employee of the seller (other than a part-time employee) as of the effective date of the sale shall be considered an employee of the purchaser immediately after the effective date of the sale.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (a)(6), an employee may not be considered to have experienced an employment loss if the closing or layoff is the result of the relocation or consolidation of part or all of the employer's business and, prior to the closing or layoff—

(A) the employer offers to transfer the employee to a different site of employment within a reasonable commuting distance with no more than a 6-month break in employment; or

(B) the employer offers to transfer the employee to any other site of employment regardless of distance with no more than a 6-month break in employment, and the employee accepts within 30 days of the offer or of the closing or layoff, whichever is later.

SEC. 3. NOTICE REQUIRED BEFORE PLANT CLOSINGS AND MASS LAYOFFS. 29 USC 2102.

(a) **NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES, STATE DISLOCATED WORKER UNITS, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.**—An employer shall not order a plant closing or mass layoff until the end of a 60-day period after the employer serves written notice of such an order—

(1) to each representative of the affected employees as of the time of the notice or, if there is no such representative at that time, to each affected employee; and

(2) to the State dislocated worker unit (designated or created under title III of the Job Training Partnership Act) and the chief elected official of the unit of local government within which such closing or layoff is to occur.

If there is more than one such unit, the unit of local government which the employer shall notify is the unit of local government to which the employer pays the highest taxes for the year preceding the year for which the determination is made.

(b) **REDUCTION OF NOTIFICATION PERIOD.**—(1) An employer may order the shutdown of a single site of employment before the conclusion of the 60-day period if as of the time that notice would have been required the employer was actively seeking capital or business which, if obtained, would have enabled the employer to avoid or postpone the shutdown and the employer reasonably and in good faith believed that giving the notice required would have precluded the employer from obtaining the needed capital or business.

(2)(A) An employer may order a plant closing or mass layoff before the conclusion of the 60-day period if the closing or mass layoff is caused by business circumstances that were not reasonably foreseeable as of the time that notice would have been required.

(B) No notice under this Act shall be required if the plant closing or mass layoff is due to any form of natural disaster, such as a flood, earthquake, or the drought currently ravaging the farmlands of the United States.

(3) An employer relying on this subsection shall give as much notice as is practicable and at that time shall give a brief statement of the basis for reducing the notification period.

(c) **EXTENSION OF LAYOFF PERIOD.**—A layoff of more than 6 months which, at its outset, was announced to be a layoff of 6 months or less, shall be treated as an employment loss under this Act unless—

(1) the extension beyond 6 months is caused by business circumstances (including unforeseeable changes in price or cost) not reasonably foreseeable at the time of the initial layoff; and

(2) notice is given at the time it becomes reasonably foreseeable that the extension beyond 6 months will be required.

(d) **DETERMINATIONS WITH RESPECT TO EMPLOYMENT LOSS.**—For purposes of this section, in determining whether a plant closing or mass layoff has occurred or will occur, employment losses for 2 or more groups at a single site of employment, each of which is less than the minimum number of employees specified in section 2(a) (2) or (3) but which in the aggregate exceed that minimum number, and which occur within any 90-day period shall be considered to be a plant closing or mass layoff unless the employer demonstrates that the employment losses are the result of separate and distinct actions and causes and are not an attempt by the employer to evade the requirements of this Act.

29 USC 2103.

SEC. 4. EXEMPTIONS.

This Act shall not apply to a plant closing or mass layoff if—

(1) the closing is of a temporary facility or the closing or layoff is the result of the completion of a particular project or undertaking, and the affected employees were hired with the understanding that their employment was limited to the duration of the facility or the project or undertaking; or

(2) the closing or layoff constitutes a strike or constitutes a lockout not intended to evade the requirements of this Act. Nothing in this Act shall require an employer to serve written notice pursuant to section 3(a) of this Act when permanently replacing a person who is deemed to be an economic striker under the National Labor Relations Act: *Provided*, That nothing in this Act shall be deemed to validate or invalidate any judicial or administrative ruling relating to the hiring of permanent replacements for economic strikers under the National Labor Relations Act.

SEC. 5. ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS.

29 USC 2104.

(a) CIVIL ACTIONS AGAINST EMPLOYERS.—(1) Any employer who orders a plant closing or mass layoff in violation of section 3 of this Act shall be liable to each aggrieved employee who suffers an employment loss as a result of such closing or layoff for—

(A) back pay for each day of violation at a rate of compensation not less than the higher of—

Wages.

(i) the average regular rate received by such employee during the last 3 years of the employee's employment; or

(ii) the final regular rate received by such employee; and

(B) benefits under an employee benefit plan described in section 3(3) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1002(3)), including the cost of medical expenses incurred during the employment loss which would have been covered under an employee benefit plan if the employment loss had not occurred.

Health and medical care.

Such liability shall be calculated for the period of the violation, up to a maximum of 60 days, but in no event for more than one-half the number of days the employee was employed by the employer.

(2) The amount for which an employer is liable under paragraph (1) shall be reduced by—

(A) any wages paid by the employer to the employee for the period of the violation;

Wages.

(B) any voluntary and unconditional payment by the employer to the employee that is not required by any legal obligation; and

(C) any payment by the employer to a third party or trustee (such as premiums for health benefits or payments to a defined contribution pension plan) on behalf of and attributable to the employee for the period of the violation.

Health and medical care.
Retirement.

In addition, any liability incurred under paragraph (1) with respect to a defined benefit pension plan may be reduced by crediting the employee with service for all purposes under such a plan for the period of the violation.

(3) Any employer who violates the provisions of section 3 with respect to a unit of local government shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$500 for each day of such violation, except that such penalty shall not apply if the employer pays to each aggrieved employee the amount for which the employer is liable to that employee within 3 weeks from the date the employer orders the shutdown or layoff.

(4) If an employer which has violated this Act proves to the satisfaction of the court that the act or omission that violated this Act was in good faith and that the employer had reasonable grounds for believing that the act or omission was not a violation of this Act the court may, in its discretion, reduce the amount of the liability or penalty provided for in this section.

Courts, U.S.

(5) A person seeking to enforce such liability, including a representative of employees or a unit of local government aggrieved under paragraph (1) or (3), may sue either for such person or for other persons similarly situated, or both, in any district court of the United States for any district in which the violation is alleged to have occurred, or in which the employer transacts business.

State and local governments.

(6) In any such suit, the court, in its discretion, may allow the prevailing party a reasonable attorney's fee as part of the costs.

Courts, U.S.

(7) For purposes of this subsection, the term, "aggrieved employee" means an employee who has worked for the employer ordering the plant closing or mass layoff and who, as a result of the failure by the employer to comply with section 3, did not receive timely notice either directly or through his or her representative as required by section 3.

Courts, U.S.

(b) **EXCLUSIVITY OF REMEDIES.**—The remedies provided for in this section shall be the exclusive remedies for any violation of this Act. Under this Act, a Federal court shall not have authority to enjoin a plant closing or mass layoff.

29 USC 2105.

SEC. 6. PROCEDURES IN ADDITION TO OTHER RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES.

Contracts.

The rights and remedies provided to employees by this Act are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other contractual or statutory rights and remedies of the employees, and are not intended to alter or affect such rights and remedies, except that the period of notification required by this Act shall run concurrently with any period of notification required by contract or by any other statute.

29 USC 2106.

SEC. 7. PROCEDURES ENCOURAGED WHERE NOT REQUIRED.

It is the sense of Congress that an employer who is not required to comply with the notice requirements of section 3 should, to the extent possible, provide notice to its employees about a proposal to close a plant or permanently reduce its workforce.

29 USC 2107.

SEC. 8. AUTHORITY TO PRESCRIBE REGULATIONS.

(a) The Secretary of Labor shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this Act. Such regulations shall, at a minimum, include interpretative regulations describing the methods by which employers may provide for appropriate service of notice as required by this Act.

(b) The mailing of notice to an employee's last known address or inclusion of notice in the employee's paycheck will be considered acceptable methods for fulfillment of the employer's obligation to give notice to each affected employee under this Act.

29 USC 2108.

SEC. 9. EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.

The giving of notice pursuant to this Act, if done in good faith compliance with this Act, shall not constitute a violation of the National Labor Relations Act or the Railway Labor Act.

29 USC 2109.

SEC. 10. REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS.

Two years after the date of enactment of this Act the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Small Business of both the House and Senate, the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, and the Committee on Education and Labor a report containing a detailed and objective analysis of the effect of this Act on employers (especially small- and medium-sized businesses), the economy (international competitiveness), and employees (in terms of levels and conditions of employment). The Comptroller General shall assess both costs and benefits, including the effect on productivity, competitiveness, unemployment rates and compensation, and worker retraining and readjustment.

SEC. 11. EFFECTIVE DATE.29 USC 2101
note.

This Act shall take effect on the date which is 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, except that the authority of the Secretary of Labor under section 8 is effective upon enactment.

[Note by the Office of the Federal Register: The foregoing Act, having been presented to the President of the United States on Friday, July 22, 1988, and not having been returned by him to the House of Congress in which it originated within the time prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, has become law without his signature on August 4, 1988.]

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 2527:**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD**, Vol. 134 (1988):

June 22-24, 27-29, July 6, considered and passed Senate.

July 13, considered and passed House.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 24 (1988):

Aug. 2, Presidential statement.