

S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

3445--A

2009-2010 Regular Sessions

I N S E N A T E

March 19, 2009

Introduced by Sen. SAVINO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Labor -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the labor law and the general business law, in relation to the prompt payment of employees and contractors engaged in private construction projects

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. Section 196-a of the labor law, as added by chapter 605 of
2 the laws of 1997, is amended to read as follows:
3 S 196-a. Complaints by employees to commissioner. (A) Any employee,
4 or the recognized and certified collective bargaining agent acting on
5 the employee's behalf, may file with the commissioner a complaint
6 regarding a violation of THIS article [six], article nineteen, or arti-
7 cle nineteen-A of this chapter for an investigation of such complaint
8 and statement setting the appropriate remedy, if any. Failure of an
9 employer to keep adequate records, in addition to exposing such employer
10 to penalties authorized under subdivision one of section two hundred
11 eighteen of this chapter, shall not operate as a bar to filing of a
12 complaint by an employee. In such a case the employer in violation shall
13 bear the burden of proving that the complaining employee was paid wages,
14 benefits and wage supplements.
15 (B) ANY EMPLOYEE, OR THE RECOGNIZED AND CERTIFIED COLLECTIVE BARGAIN-
16 ING AGENT ACTING ON THE EMPLOYEE'S BEHALF, CONTRACTOR, OR THE RECOGNIZED
17 AND CERTIFIED LABOR ORGANIZATION WITH WHICH THE CONTRACTOR HAS EXECUTED
18 A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT COVERING WAGES, BENEFITS AND SUPPLE-
19 MENTS, MAY FILE WITH THE COMMISSIONER A COMPLAINT REGARDING A VIOLATION
20 OF OR THE POTENTIAL FOR THE IMMINENT VIOLATION OF, THIS ARTICLE, ARTICLE
21 NINETEEN, OR ARTICLE NINETEEN-A OF THIS CHAPTER OCCASIONED BY ANOTHER
22 PERSON, CORPORATION, EMPLOYER OR ENTITIES IN VIOLATION OF ARTICLE THIR-

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[] is old law to be omitted.

LBD10170-05-9

TY-FIVE-E OF THE GENERAL BUSINESS LAW FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF SUCH COMPLAINT AND STATEMENT SETTING THE APPROPRIATE REMEDY, IF ANY.

S 2. Subdivision 1 of section 756 of the general business law, as added by chapter 127 of the laws of 2002, is amended to read as follows:

1. "Construction contract" means a written or oral agreement for the construction, reconstruction, alteration, maintenance, moving or demolition of any building, structure or improvement, or relating to the excavation of or other development or improvement to land, and where the aggregate cost of the construction project including all labor, services, materials and equipment to be furnished, equals or exceeds [two hundred fifty thousand dollars] ONE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. For the purposes of this article a construction contract shall not include any such contract made and awarded by the state, any public department, any public benefit corporation, any public corporation or official thereof, or a municipal corporation or official thereof for construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, maintenance, moving or demolition of any public works project nor any contract with a contractor or subcontractor which is part of such project; or any such contract the purpose of which is the construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, maintenance, moving or demolition of an individual one, two or three family residential dwelling or a residential tract development of one hundred [fifty] or less one or two family dwellings, or any residential construction project where the aggregate size of such project is [nine thousand] FOUR THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED square feet or less, or any residential project of fewer than [one hundred fifty] SEVENTY-FIVE units which receives financial assistance from the federal government, the state or a municipal entity designed for households earning an average of one hundred twenty-five percent of the housing and urban development agency area median income.

S 3. Section 756-a of the general business law, as added by chapter 127 of the laws of 2002, is amended to read as follows:

S 756-a. Obligations. [Except as otherwise provided in this article, the terms and conditions of a construction contract shall supersede the provisions of this article and govern the conduct of the parties thereto.]

1. Billing cycle. The [parties to a construction contract may, by mutual agreement, establish a billing cycle for the submission of invoices requesting payment for work performed pursuant to a construction contract. In the absence of an agreement by the parties as to the billing cycle, the] billing cycle shall be the calendar month within which the work is performed.

2. Invoices. (a) A contractor shall be entitled to invoice the owner for interim payments at the end of the billing cycle. A contractor shall be entitled to submit a final invoice for payment in full upon the performance of all the contractor's obligation under the contract.

(i) Upon delivery of an invoice and all contractually required documentation, an owner shall approve or disapprove all or a portion of such invoice within twelve business days. Owner approval of invoices shall not be unreasonably withheld nor shall an owner, in bad faith disapprove all or a portion of an invoice. If an owner declines to approve an invoice or a portion thereof, it must prepare and issue a written statement describing those items in the invoice that are not approved. An owner may decline to approve an invoice or portion of an invoice for:

- (1) Unsatisfactory or disputed job progress;
- (2) Defective construction work or material not remedied;

1 (3) Disputed work materials;

2 (4) Failure to comply with other material provisions of the
3 construction contract;

4 (5) Failure of the contractor to make timely payments for labor
5 including collectively bargained fringe benefit contributions, payroll
6 taxes and insurance, equipment and materials, damage to the owner, or
7 reasonable evidence that the construction contract cannot be completed
8 for the unpaid balance of the construction contract sum; or

9 (6) Failure of the owner's architect to certify payment for any or all
10 of the reasons set forth in this section so long as the reasons are
11 included in the owner's written statement of disapproval.

12 (ii) Upon delivery of an invoice and all contractually required
13 documentation, a contractor or subcontractor shall approve or disapprove
14 all or a portion of such invoice within twelve business days. Contractor
15 and subcontractor approval of invoices shall not be unreasonably with-
16 held nor shall a contractor or subcontractor, in bad faith, disapprove
17 all or a portion of an invoice. Nothing in this section shall prohibit
18 the contractor or subcontractor, at the time of application to the owner
19 or contractor, from withholding such application to the owner or
20 contractor for payment to the subcontractor or material supplier for:

21 (1) Unsatisfactory or disputed job progress;

22 (2) Defective construction work or material not remedied;

23 (3) Disputed work;

24 (4) Failure to comply with other material provisions of the
25 construction contract; or

26 (5) Failure of the subcontractor to make timely payments for labor
27 including collectively bargained fringe benefit contributions; payroll
28 taxes and insurance, equipment and materials, damage to contractor or
29 another subcontractor or material supplier, or reasonable evidence that
30 the subcontract cannot be completed for the unpaid balance of the
31 subcontract sum.

32 (b) Nothing in this subdivision shall authorize the withholding of an
33 application to the owner or contractor for the payment to a subcontrac-
34 tor or material supplier when due to a delay in job progress by the
35 owner, contractor or another subcontractor or material supplier other
36 than the applicant or applicant's subcontractor or material supplier.

37 3. Payment. (a) The owner's payment of a contractor's interim and
38 final invoices shall be made on the basis of a duly approved invoice of
39 work performed and the material supplied during the billing cycle.

40 (i) Unless the provisions of this article provide otherwise, the owner
41 shall pay the contractor strictly in accordance with the terms of the
42 construction contract.

43 (ii) [Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, payment] PAYMENT of
44 an interim or final invoice shall be due from the owner not later than
45 thirty days after approval of the invoice.

46 (iii) If payment by the owner is contingent upon lender approval,
47 payment of a contractor's interim or final invoice or the amount of loan
48 proceeds disbursed by the lender for payment of the contractor's interim
49 or final invoice shall be due from the owner seven days after receipt by
50 the owner of good funds except where the provisions of section seven
51 hundred fifty-six-d of this article applies.

52 (iv) An owner may withhold from an interim payment only an amount that
53 is sufficient to pay the costs and expenses the owner reasonably expects
54 to incur in order to cure the defect or correct any items set forth in
55 writing pursuant to subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a) of subdivision two
56 of this section, or in the alternative, to withhold an amount not to

1 exceed the line item amount appearing in the agreed schedule of values
2 together with any change orders, additions and/or deletions, if such
3 schedule has been previously submitted, and/or an amount sufficient to
4 cover liquidated damages as established in an agreed upon schedule in
5 the construction contract.

6 (b) The contractor or subcontractor's payment of subcontractor or
7 material supplier's interim or final invoice shall be made on the basis
8 of a duly approved invoice of the work performed and materials supplied
9 during the billing cycle.

10 (i) Unless the provisions of this article provide otherwise, the
11 contractor or subcontractor shall pay the subcontractor strictly in
12 accordance with the terms of the construction contract. Performance by a
13 subcontractor in accordance with the provisions of its contract shall
14 entitle it to payment from the party with which it contracts. Notwith-
15 standing this article, where a contractor enters into a construction
16 contract with a subcontractor as agent for a disclosed owner, the
17 payment obligation shall flow directly from the disclosed owner as prin-
18 cipal to the subcontractor and through the agent.

19 (ii) When a subcontractor has performed in accordance with the
20 provisions of its construction contract, the contractor shall pay to the
21 subcontractor, and each subcontractor shall in turn pay to its subcon-
22 tractors, the full or proportionate amount of funds received from the
23 owner for each subcontractor's work and materials based on work or
24 services provided under the construction contract, seven days after
25 receipt of good funds for each interim or final payment, provided all
26 contractually required documentation and waivers are received.

27 (iii) A contractor or subcontractor may withhold amounts received from
28 an owner in connection with an interim payment due to a subcontractor or
29 material supplier only such sums that are sufficient to pay the direct
30 expenses as are reasonable to correct deficiencies identified pursuant
31 to subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of subdivision two of this
32 section, or in the alternative, to withhold an amount not to exceed the
33 line item amount appearing in the agreed schedule of values, together
34 with any change order, additions or deletions, if such schedule has been
35 previously submitted[, and/or an amount sufficient to cover liquidated
36 damages as established in an agreed upon schedule in the construction
37 contract].

38 (iv) If a contractor, after submitting an invoice to an owner under a
39 construction contract, but before making a payment to a subcontractor or
40 material supplier for the subcontractor's or material supplier's
41 performance covered by such invoice, discovers that all or a portion of
42 the payment otherwise due to the subcontractor or material supplier is
43 subject to withholding from the subcontractor or material supplier in
44 accordance with the construction contract and the conditions set forth
45 in subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of subdivision two of this
46 section, then the contractor shall:

47 (1) As soon as practicable upon ascertaining the cause giving rise to
48 a withholding, but prior to the due date for a subcontractor or material
49 supplier payment, furnish to the subcontractor or material supplier and
50 the owner written notice of withholding specifying conditions for with-
51 holding payment and identifying the amount to be withheld;

52 (2) Reduce the subcontractor's or material supplier's interim payment
53 by an amount not to exceed the amount specified in the notice of with-
54 holding; and

55 (3) Pay the subcontractor or material supplier amounts withheld within
56 seven days after correction of the identified subcontractor or material

1 supplier performance deficiency and receipt of all required documenta-
2 tion and waivers, unless the funds [therefore] THEREFOR must be obtained
3 from the owner's next interim payment due to a reduction in the contrac-
4 tor's billing directly resulting from the subcontractor's or material
5 supplier's performance deficiency identified in the notice of withhold-
6 ing.

7 (c) A written notice of any withholding under this subdivision shall
8 be issued to a subcontractor or material supplier specifying:

9 (i) The amount to be withheld;

10 (ii) The specific causes for withholding under the terms of the
11 construction contract and pursuant to this subdivision;

12 (iii) The remedial actions necessary to be taken by the subcontractor
13 or material supplier in order to receive payments of the amounts with-
14 held; and

15 (iv) The documentation and waivers required.

16 4. Notice. A contractor or subcontractor shall disclose to a subcon-
17 tractor, at the time the construction subcontract is entered into, the
18 due date for receipt of payments to the contractor or subcontractor from
19 the owner or the contractor as the case may be. If a contractor or
20 subcontractor fails to accurately disclose the due date to a subcontrac-
21 tor, the contractor or subcontractor shall be obligated to pay the
22 subcontractor as though the due dates established in paragraph (a) of
23 subdivision three of this section were met by the owner. In addition,
24 upon written request of a subcontractor, the owner shall provide notice
25 to such subcontractor within five days of making any interim or final
26 payment to the contractor. The subcontractor's request shall remain in
27 effect for the duration of the subcontractor's work on the project.

28 S 4. Section 756-b of the general business law, as added by chapter
29 127 of the laws of 2002, is amended to read as follows:

30 S 756-b. Remedies. 1. (a) If any interim or final payment to a
31 contractor is delayed beyond the due date established in paragraph (a)
32 of subdivision three of section seven hundred fifty-six-a of this arti-
33 cle, the owner shall pay the contractor interest beginning on the next
34 day at the rate of one percent per month or fraction of a month on the
35 unpaid balance, or at a higher rate consistent with the construction
36 contract.

37 (b) [Notwithstanding any contrary agreement, if] IF any interim or
38 final payment to a subcontractor is delayed beyond the due date estab-
39 lished in paragraph (b) of subdivision three of section seven hundred
40 fifty-six-a of this article the contractor or subcontractor shall pay
41 its subcontractor interest, beginning on the next day, at the rate of
42 one percent a month or fraction of a month on the unpaid balance, or at
43 a higher rate consistent with the construction contract.

44 2. (a) (i) If an owner fails to approve or disapprove an invoice with-
45 in the time limits established in subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a) of
46 subdivision two of section seven hundred fifty-six-a of this article, or
47 to pay the contractor the undisputed invoice amount within the time
48 limits provided by paragraph (a) of subdivision three of section seven
49 hundred fifty-six-a of this article, the contractor may suspend contrac-
50 tually required performance, only after providing the owner written
51 notice and an opportunity to cure consistent with subparagraph (ii) of
52 this paragraph.

53 (ii) A contractor intending to suspend performance on the construction
54 contract for failure of the owner to make timely payments or approvals
55 within the time limits provided by this article must provide the owner

1 written notice at least ten calendar days before the contractor's
2 intended suspension. Such notice shall:

3 (A) inform the owner that payment for undisputed invoice amounts have
4 not been received; and

5 (B) state the intent of the contractor to suspend performance for
6 non-payment.

7 If after the tenth calendar day following written notice the owner has
8 not cured the deficiency, the contractor may suspend performance.

9 (iii) A contractor shall not be deemed in breach of the construction
10 contract for suspending performance pursuant to this section.

11 (b)(i) A subcontractor may suspend contractually required performance
12 if any or all of the occurrences outlined in clauses (A), (B) and (C) of
13 this subparagraph occur and only after providing written notice and an
14 opportunity to cure consistent with subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph:

15 (A) If an owner fails to make timely payments for undisputed invoices
16 within the time limits established by subdivision three of section seven
17 hundred fifty-six-a of this article for the subcontractor's work and the
18 contractor also fails to pay the subcontractor for the approved work;

19 (B) If an owner pays the contractor within the time limits established
20 by subdivision three of section seven hundred fifty-six-a of this arti-
21 cle for undisputed invoices for work performed by the subcontractor but
22 the contractor fails to make payment to the subcontractor within the
23 time frames established by this article for the subcontractor's work;

24 (C) If an owner fails to approve or disapprove a portion of contrac-
25 tor's invoice for work performed by the subcontractor within the time
26 limits established in paragraph (a) of subdivision two of section seven
27 hundred fifty-six-a of this article;

28 (D) If a contractor or subcontractor fails to approve or disapprove a
29 subcontractor's invoice within the time limits established in paragraph
30 (b) of subdivision three of section seven hundred fifty-six-a of this
31 article; or

32 (E) If an owner fails to approve portions of the contractors' billing
33 for work performed by the subcontractor within the time limits estab-
34 lished by this article and the reasons for such failure are not the
35 fault of or directly related to the subcontractor's work.

36 (ii) A subcontractor intending to suspend performance for failure to
37 receive timely payments within the time limits established pursuant to
38 this article must provide both the owner and the contractor written
39 notice at least ten calendar days before the subcontractor's intended
40 suspension. Such notice shall:

41 (A) inform the owner and the contractor that payment for undisputed
42 billing amounts have not been received; and

43 (B) state the intent of the contractor to suspend performance for
44 non-payment.

45 If after the tenth calendar day following written notice either the
46 owner or the contractor has not cured the deficiency, the subcontractor
47 may suspend performance AND/OR ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE IN COMPLIANCE WITH
48 SUBDIVISION THREE OF THIS SECTION.

49 (iii) A subcontractor shall not be deemed in breach of the
50 construction contract for suspending performance pursuant to this
51 section.

52 (iv) (A) A contractor or subcontractor that suspends performance as
53 provided in this section shall not be required to furnish further labor,
54 materials or services until the contractor or subcontractor is paid the
55 undisputed invoice amount at the time period for completion as provided
56 in the construction contract, OR A FINAL DETERMINATION HAS BEEN MADE IN

1 COMPLIANCE WITH SUBDIVISION THREE OF THIS SECTION AND COMPLIED WITH.
2 All of the time frames established within [the construction contract of
3 a contractor or subcontractor] THIS SECTION shall be extended for the
4 length of time performance was suspended. Payment of documented actual
5 costs incurred for re-mobilization resulting from suspension shall be
6 negotiated between the parties.

7 (B) In the event of suspension of a construction contract, as provided
8 in this article, all materials, equipment, tools, construction equipment
9 and machinery located at the job site shall remain the sole and exclu-
10 sive property of the contractor or subcontractor and shall be removed
11 from the job site, if necessary, within a reasonable period of time.
12 Access to the contractor's or subcontractor's property shall not be
13 unreasonably withheld.

14 3. IT IS THE POLICY AND PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE TO EXPEDITE PAYMENT OF
15 ALL MONIES OWED TO THOSE WHO PERFORM CONTRACTING SERVICES PURSUANT TO
16 CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS. (A) UPON RECEIPT OF WRITTEN NOTICE OF A
17 COMPLAINT (I) THAT AN OWNER HAS VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE;
18 (II) THAT A CONTRACTOR HAS VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE;
19 (III) WHERE A CONTRACTOR ALLEGES A SUBCONTRACTOR HAS VIOLATED THE
20 PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE; (IV) WHERE A SUBCONTRACTOR ALLEGES A
21 CONTRACTOR HAS VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE; (V) WHERE A
22 SUBCONTRACTOR ALLEGES THAT ANOTHER SUBCONTRACTOR HAS VIOLATED THE
23 PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE; (VI) WHERE A CONTRACTOR OR SUBCONTRACTOR
24 ALLEGES A MATERIAL SUPPLIER HAS VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE;
25 OR (VII) WHERE A MATERIAL SUPPLIER ALLEGES A CONTRACTOR OR SUBCONTRACTOR
26 HAS VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE; THE PARTIES SHALL ATTEMPT
27 TO RESOLVE THE MATTER GIVING RISE TO SUCH COMPLAINT.

28 (B) THE WRITTEN NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE DELIVERED
29 AT OR SENT BY ANY MEANS THAT PROVIDES WRITTEN, THIRD-PARTY VERIFICATION
30 OF DELIVERY TO THE LAST BUSINESS ADDRESS KNOWN TO THE PARTY GIVING
31 NOTICE.

32 (C) IF EFFORTS TO RESOLVE SUCH MATTER TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL
33 PARTIES ARE UNSUCCESSFUL, THE AGGRIEVED PARTY MAY REFER THE MATTER,
34 WITHIN THIRTY DAYS OF THE RECEIPT OF THE COMPLAINT, TO THE AMERICAN
35 ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION FOR AN EXPEDITED ARBITRATION PURSUANT TO THE
36 RULES OF THE AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION.

37 (D) UPON CONCLUSION OF THE ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS, THE ARBITRATOR
38 SHALL SUBMIT TO THE PARTIES HIS OR HER OPINION AND AWARD REGARDING THE
39 ALLEGED VIOLATION.

40 (E) THE AWARD OF THE ARBITRATOR SHALL BE FINAL AND MAY ONLY BE VACATED
41 OR MODIFIED AS PROVIDED IN ARTICLE SEVENTY-FIVE OF THE CIVIL PRACTICE
42 LAW AND RULES UPON AN APPLICATION MADE WITHIN THE TIME PROVIDED BY
43 SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE HUNDRED TWO OF THE CIVIL PRACTICE LAW AND RULES.

44 S 5. Section 757 of the general business law is amended by adding a
45 new subdivision 3 to read as follows:

46 3. A PROVISION, COVENANT, CLAUSE OR UNDERSTANDING IN, COLLATERAL TO OR
47 AFFECTING A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT STATING THAT ARBITRATION IS UNAVAIL-
48 ABLE TO ONE OR BOTH PARTIES.

49 S 6. This act shall take effect immediately and shall apply to
50 construction contracts entered into after such date, except those
51 contracts entered into as part of a construction project for which a
52 permit or permits have been issued and work has begun on such projects
53 prior to the effective date of this act.