

STATE OF NEW YORK

10725

IN ASSEMBLY

May 15, 2018

Introduced by M. of A. BRONSON -- read once and referred to the Committee on Labor

AN ACT to amend the labor law, in relation to the payment of independent contractors

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The labor law is amended by adding two new sections 196-b and 196-c to read as follows:

§ 196-b. Definitions relating to independent contractors. For purposes of this section and section one hundred ninety-six-c of this article, the term:

1. "Compensation" means the earnings of an independent contractor. The term "compensation" also includes reimbursement for expenses.

2. "Independent contractor" means a sole proprietor who is not an employee and who is hired or retained by a client for an amount equal to or greater than six hundred dollars; but shall not include a construction contractor.

3. "Client" includes a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, association or non-profitmaking organization contracting with an independent contractor in any occupation, industry, trade, business or service for compensation equal to or greater than six hundred dollars. The term "client" shall not include a governmental entity, including but not limited to, any agency, board, department, commission of the state or any political subdivision thereof; and client shall not include a person.

4. "Construction contractor" means any person, sole proprietor, partnership, firm, corporation, limited liability company, association or other legal entity who by oneself or through others offers to undertake, or holds oneself out as being able to undertake, or does undertake a construction project.

5. "Construction project" means the providing of any labor or services, and the use of any materials or equipment in order to alter, build, excavate, add to, subtract from, improve, repair, maintain, renovate, move, wreck or demolish any bridge, building, highway, road, rail-

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

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1 road, land, tunnel, sewer, drainage or other structure, project, devel-
2 opment, or improvement, or the doing of any part thereof, including the
3 erection of scaffolding or other structures or works in connection ther-
4 ewith.

5 § 196-c. Payment of independent contractors. 1. An independent
6 contractor shall be paid the compensation earned in accordance with the
7 agreed work terms. If an independent contractor and client did not
8 agree on a date for payment of compensation earned, the independent
9 contractor shall be paid the compensation earned not later than the last
10 day of the month following the month in which the compensation is
11 earned. The agreed work terms shall be reduced in writing, signed by
12 both the client and the independent contractor, kept on file by the
13 client for a period of not less than six years and made available to the
14 commissioner upon request. Such writing shall include a description of
15 how compensation earned and payable shall be calculated. The failure of
16 a client to produce such written work terms, upon request of the commis-
17 sioner, shall give rise to a presumption that the terms that the inde-
18 pendent contractor has presented are the agreed terms.

19 2. The commissioner shall investigate and attempt to adjust equitably
20 controversies between clients and independent contractors relating to
21 this section.

22 3. The commissioner may take assignments of claims for compensation as
23 defined in section one hundred ninety-six-b of this article from inde-
24 pendent contractors or third parties in trust for such independent
25 contractors or for the various funds for such independent contractors.
26 All such assignments shall run to the commissioner and his successor in
27 office. The commissioner may sue clients on compensation claims thus
28 assigned. He may join in a single action any number of compensation
29 claims against the same company.

30 4. Any independent contractor may file with the commissioner a
31 complaint regarding a violation of this article for an investigation of
32 such complaint and statement setting the appropriate remedy, if any.
33 Failure of a client to keep adequate records shall not operate as a bar
34 to filing of a complaint by an independent contractor. In such a case
35 the client in violation shall bear the burden of proving that the
36 complaining independent contractor was paid compensation.

37 5. On behalf of any independent contractor paid less than the compen-
38 sation to which he or she is entitled under the agreed work terms under
39 the provisions of this article, the commissioner may bring any legal
40 action necessary, including administrative action, to collect such claim
41 and as part of such legal action, in addition to any other remedies and
42 penalties otherwise available under this article, the commissioner shall
43 assess against the client an additional amount as liquidated damages,
44 unless the client proves a good faith basis for believing that its
45 underpayment of compensation was in compliance with the law. Liquidated
46 damages shall be calculated by the commissioner as no more than one
47 hundred percent of the total amount of compensation found to be due. In
48 any action instituted in the courts upon a compensation claim by an
49 independent contractor or the commissioner in which the independent
50 contractor prevails, the court shall allow such independent contractor
51 all reasonable attorney's fees, prejudgment interest as required under
52 the civil practice law and rules, and, unless the client proves a good
53 faith basis to believe that its underpayment of compensation was in
54 compliance with the law, an additional amount as liquidated damages
55 equal to one hundred percent of the total amount of compensation found

1 to be due. The remedies provided by this article may be enforced simul-
2 taneously or consecutively so far as not inconsistent with each other.

3 6. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action to recover
4 upon a liability imposed by this article must be commenced within six
5 years. All independent contractors shall have the right to recover full
6 compensation accrued during the six years previous to the commencing of
7 such action, whether such action is instituted by the independent
8 contractor or by the commissioner.

9 7. Each independent contractor who files a complaint regarding a
10 violation of a provision of this article shall be provided with a writ-
11 ten description of the anticipated processing of the complaint, includ-
12 ing investigation, case conference, potential civil and criminal penal-
13 ties, and collection procedures.

14 8. Each independent contractor and his or her representative shall be
15 notified in writing of any case conference before it is held and given
16 the opportunity to attend.

17 9. Each independent contractor and his or her representative shall be
18 notified in writing of any award and collection of back compensation and
19 civil penalties, and of any intent to seek criminal penalties. In the
20 event that criminal penalties are sought the independent contractor and
21 his or her representative shall be notified of the outcome of prose-
22 cution.

23 10. If the commissioner determines that a client has violated a
24 provision of this article, or a rule or regulation promulgated there-
25 under, by failing to pay the compensation of their independent contrac-
26 tors, the commissioner shall issue to the client an order directing
27 compliance therewith, which shall describe particularly the nature of
28 the alleged violation, and order the payment of interest at the rate of
29 interest then in effect as prescribed pursuant to section fourteen-a of
30 the banking law per annum from the date of the underpayment to the date
31 of the payment. In addition to directing payment of compensation found
32 to be due, such order, if issued to a client who previously has been
33 found in violation of those provisions, rules or regulations, or to a
34 client whose violation is willful or egregious, shall direct payment to
35 the commissioner of an additional sum as a civil penalty in an amount
36 equal to double the total amount found to be due.

37 11. Every client who does not pay the compensation of all of its inde-
38 pendent contractors in accordance with the provisions of this chapter,
39 and the officers and agents of any client who knowingly permit the
40 client to violate this chapter by failing to pay the compensation of any
41 of its independent contractors in accordance with the provisions there-
42 of, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor for the first offense and upon
43 conviction therefor shall be fined not less than five hundred nor more
44 than twenty thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year,
45 and, in the event that any second or subsequent offense occurs within
46 six years of the date of conviction for a prior offense, shall be guilty
47 of a felony for the second or subsequent offense, and upon conviction
48 therefor, shall be fined not less than five hundred nor more than twenty
49 thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year plus one day,
50 or punished by both such fine and imprisonment, for each such offense.

51 12. This section shall not apply to: (a) real estate brokers, associ-
52 ate brokers or salespersons licensed pursuant to article twelve-A of the
53 real property law;

54 (b) work performed on one or two family dwellings; or

55 (c) construction contractors or construction projects.

56 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.