

STATE OF NEW YORK

3481--A

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 27, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. EPSTEIN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Correction -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the correction law, in relation to inmate labor

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

1 Section 1. Subdivision 3 of section 170 of the correction law, as
2 added by chapter 256 of the laws of 2010, is amended and three new
3 subdivisions 4, 5 and 6 are added to read as follows:

4 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an inmate may be
5 permitted to leave the institution under guard to voluntarily perform
6 work for a nonprofit organization. As used in this section, the term
7 "nonprofit organization" means an organization operated exclusively for
8 religious, charitable, or educational purposes, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of the state of New York, the
9 government of the United States or to any state of the United States, or
10 political subdivision thereof, any public corporation or eleemosynary
11 association or corporation funded in whole or in part by any federal,
12 state or local funds or any private shareholder or individual.

13 4. (a) No inmate shall be compelled to provide labor against his or
14 her will by actual force, threats of force, threats of punishment,
15 threats of legal coercion or by any scheme, plan or pattern intended to
16 cause the inmate to believe that, if the inmate did not provide such
17 labor, that inmate or another person would suffer physical, emotional or
18 mental harm.

19 (b) For the purposes of this subdivision, the failure to pay, or
20 underpayment of, all wages due for work performed shall also constitute
21 force.

22 5. Any inmate alleging a violation of subdivision four of this section
23 against any state or local correctional facility in the state shall have
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EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 a cause of action in the court of appropriate jurisdiction for damages
2 and injunctive relief and such other remedies as may be appropriate.

3 6. (a) Any inmate alleging a violation of subdivision four of this
4 section against any officer or employee of any state or local correc-
5 tional facility in the state shall within ten years after the acts
6 alleged to have violated this subdivision have a cause of action for
7 damages, including punitive damages, and for injunctive relief and such
8 other remedies as may be appropriate together with all reasonable attor-
9 ney's fees and costs.

10 (b) The immunity granted pursuant to subdivision one of section twen-
11 ty-four of this chapter shall not extend to actions brought pursuant to
12 subdivision four of this section, and any action commenced under subdivi-
13 vision four may be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction,
14 including the supreme court.

15 (c) A violation of any of the foregoing provisions shall constitute
16 sufficient cause for the removal of such employee by the duly consti-
17 tuted authority having jurisdiction.

18 § 2. Subdivision 1 of section 171 of the correction law, as amended by
19 section 24 of subpart A of part C of chapter 62 of the laws of 2011, is
20 amended to read as follows:

21 ~~1. [The commissioner and the superintendents and officials of all~~
22 ~~penitentiaries in the state may cause inmates in the state correctional~~
23 ~~facilities and such penitentiaries who are physically capable thereof to~~
24 ~~be employed for not to exceed eight hours of each day other than Sundays~~
25 ~~and public holidays. Notwithstanding any other provision of this~~
26 ~~section, however, the commissioner and superintendents of state correc-~~
27 ~~tional facilities may employ inmates on a volunteer basis on Sundays and~~
28 ~~public holidays in specialized areas of the facility, including kitchen~~
29 ~~areas, vehicular garages, rubbish pickup and grounds maintenance,~~
30 ~~providing, however, that inmates so employed shall be allowed an alter-~~
31 ~~native free day within the normal work week.] All persons incarcerated~~
32 in any state or local correctional facility in the state who request
33 employment shall be afforded an equal opportunity to be employed, and
34 the commissioner, the superintendents and officials of all penitentiari-
35 es must make all efforts to ensure that job assignments are distributed
36 equitably such that, to the extent practicable, work is provided to all
37 who request employment.

38 § 3. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall
39 have become a law.