

STATE OF NEW YORK

3266

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 30, 2023

Introduced by Sen. HOYLMAN-SIGAL -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the judiciary law and the labor law, in relation to creating additional remedies for unlawful discharge, penalty or discrimination on account of the exercise of a juror's right to be absent from employment for jury duty

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

1 Section 1. Section 519 of the judiciary law, as added by chapter 85
2 of the laws of 1995, is amended to read as follows:

3 § 519. Right of juror to be absent from employment. Any person who is
4 summoned to serve as a juror under the provisions of this article and
5 who notifies his or her employer to that effect prior to the commence-
6 ment of a term of service shall not, on account of absence from employ-
7 ment by reason of such jury service, be subject to discharge ~~[or]~~,
8 penalty, or discrimination in any other manner. An employer may, howev-
9 er, withhold wages of any such employee serving as a juror during the
10 period of such service; provided that an employer who employs more than
11 ten employees shall not withhold the first forty dollars of such juror's
12 daily wages during the first three days of jury service. Withholding of
13 wages in accordance with this section shall not be deemed a penalty or
14 discrimination in any other manner. Violation of this section shall
15 constitute a criminal contempt of court punishable pursuant to section
16 seven hundred fifty of this chapter and shall also constitute a
17 violation of section two hundred fifteen of the labor law and be subject
18 to the civil penalties and civil action provided for thereunder.

19 § 2. Paragraph 7 of subdivision A of section 750 of the judiciary law,
20 as amended by chapter 823 of the laws of 1982, is amended to read as
21 follows:

22 7. Wilful failure to obey any mandate, process, or notice issued
23 pursuant to [~~articles~~] article sixteen[~~, seventeen, eighteen, eighteen-a~~]

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

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~~or eighteen b]~~ of ~~[the judiciary law]~~ this chapter, or to rules adopted pursuant thereto, or to any other statute relating thereto, or refusal to be sworn as provided therein, or subsection of an employee to discharge ~~[or]~~, penalty, or discrimination in any other manner on account of his or her absence from employment by reason of jury or subpoenaed witness service in violation of this chapter or section 215.11 of the penal law. Applications to punish the accused for a contempt specified in this subdivision may be made by notice of motion or by order to show cause, and shall be made returnable at the term of the supreme court at which contested motions are heard, or of the county court if the supreme court is not in session.

§ 3. Section 215 of the labor law, as amended by chapter 564 of the laws of 2010, paragraph (a) of subdivision 1 as amended by chapter 604 of the laws of 2022, paragraph (b) of subdivision 1 and paragraph (a) of subdivision 2 as amended by chapter 537 of the laws of 2014, is amended to read as follows:

§ 215. ~~[Penalties]~~ Civil penalties and civil action; prohibited retaliation. 1. (a) No employer or his or her agent, or the officer or agent of any corporation, partnership, or limited liability company, or any other person, shall discharge, threaten, penalize, or in any other manner discriminate or retaliate against any employee (i) because such employee has made a complaint to his or her employer, or to the commissioner or his or her authorized representative, or to the attorney general or any other person, that the employer has engaged in conduct that the employee, reasonably and in good faith, believes violates any provision of this chapter, or any order issued by the commissioner (ii) because such employer or person believes that such employee has made a complaint to his or her employer, or to the commissioner or his or her authorized representative, or to the attorney general, or to any other person that the employer has violated any provision of this chapter, or any order issued by the commissioner (iii) because such employee has caused to be instituted or is about to institute a proceeding under or related to this chapter, or (iv) because such employee has provided information to the commissioner or his or her authorized representative or the attorney general, or (v) because such employee has testified or is about to testify in an investigation or proceeding under this chapter, or (vi) because such employee has otherwise exercised rights protected under this chapter, or (vii) because the employer has received an adverse determination from the commissioner involving the employee, or (viii) because such employee has used any legally protected absence pursuant to federal, local, or state law, or (ix) because such employee has exercised his or her right to be absent from employment pursuant to section five hundred nineteen of the judiciary law by reason of jury service.

An employee complaint or other communication need not make explicit reference to any section or provision of this chapter to trigger the protections of this section.

As used in this section, to threaten, penalize, or in any other manner discriminate or retaliate against any employee includes; threatening to contact or contacting United States immigration authorities or otherwise reporting or threatening to report an employee's suspected citizenship or immigration status or the suspected citizenship or immigration status of an employee's family or household member, as defined in subdivision two of section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law, to a federal, state or local agency; or assessing any demerit, occurrence, any other point, or deductions from an allotted bank of time, which

1 subjects or could subject an employee to disciplinary action, which may
2 include but not be limited to failure to receive a promotion or loss of
3 pay.

4 (b) If after investigation the commissioner finds that an employer or
5 person has violated any provision of this section, the commissioner may,
6 by an order which shall describe particularly the nature of the
7 violation, assess the employer or person a civil penalty of not less
8 than one thousand nor more than ten thousand dollars provided, however,
9 that if the commissioner finds that the employer has violated the
10 provisions of this section in the preceding six years, he or she may
11 assess a civil penalty of not less than one thousand nor more than twenty
12 thousand dollars. Each act taken in contravention of a prohibition
13 contained in this section shall constitute a separate and distinct
14 violation of this section, and in assessing any such civil penalty the
15 commissioner shall consider, in addition to the nature of the violation,
16 all prior findings of violations of the provisions of this section by
17 the employer. The commissioner may also order all appropriate relief
18 including enjoining the conduct of any person or employer; ordering
19 payment of liquidated damages to the employee by the person or entity in
20 violation; and, where the person or entity in violation is an employer
21 ordering rehiring or reinstatement of the employee to his or her former
22 position or an equivalent position, and an award of lost compensation or
23 an award of front pay in lieu of reinstatement and an award of lost
24 compensation. Liquidated damages shall be calculated as an amount not
25 more than twenty thousand dollars. The commissioner may assess liqui-
26 dated damages on behalf of every employee aggrieved under this section,
27 in addition to any other remedies permitted by this section.

28 (c) The provisions of section two hundred thirteen of this article
29 shall not apply to the violations specified in this section.

30 (d) This section shall not apply to employees of the state or any
31 municipal subdivisions or departments thereof.

32 2. (a) [Am] In addition to the civil penalties provided for under
33 subdivision one of this section, an employee may bring a civil action in
34 a court of competent jurisdiction against any employer or persons
35 alleged to have violated the provisions of this section. The court shall
36 have jurisdiction to restrain violations of this section, within two
37 years after such violation, regardless of the dates of employment of the
38 employee, and to order all appropriate relief, including enjoining the
39 conduct of any person or employer; ordering payment of liquidated
40 damages, costs and reasonable attorneys' fees to the employee by the
41 person or entity in violation; and, where the person or entity in
42 violation is an employer, ordering rehiring or reinstatement of the
43 employee to his or her former position with restoration of seniority or
44 an award of front pay in lieu of reinstatement, and an award of lost
45 compensation and damages, costs and reasonable attorneys' fees. Liqui-
46 dated damages shall be calculated as an amount not more than twenty
47 thousand dollars. The court shall award liquidated damages to every
48 employee aggrieved under this section, in addition to any other remedies
49 permitted by this section. The statute of limitations shall be tolled
50 from the date an employee files a complaint with the commissioner or the
51 commissioner commences an investigation, whichever is earlier, until an
52 order to comply issued by the commissioner becomes final, or where the
53 commissioner does not issue an order, until the date on which the
54 commissioner notifies the complainant that the investigation has
55 concluded. Investigation by the commissioner shall not be a prerequisite

1 to nor a bar against a person bringing a civil action under this
2 section.

3 (b) At or before the commencement of any action under this section,
4 notice thereof shall be served upon the attorney general by the employ-
5 ee.

6 3. Any employer or his or her agent, or the officer or agent of any
7 corporation, partnership, or limited liability company, or any other
8 person who violates subdivision one of this section shall be guilty of a
9 class B misdemeanor.

10 § 4. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall
11 have become a law; provided that if the amendments to paragraph (a) of
12 subdivision 1 of section 215 of the labor law made by chapter 604 of the
13 laws of 2022 shall not yet have taken effect then the amendments to such
14 paragraph made by section three of this act shall take effect on the
15 same date and in the same manner as such chapter, takes effect.