EHB 1600

THE STATE SENATE

Monday, April 6, 2009

ENGROSSED

House Bill No. 1600

As Amended

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1600 - By: Sullivan, Faught, Denney and Tibbs of the House and Coffee of the Senate.

[workers' compensation - schedule of compensation - soft tissue injury - effective date]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 85 O.S. 2001, Section 22, as amended by Section 20, Chapter 1, 1st Extraordinary Session, O.S.L. 2005 (85 O.S. Supp. 2008, Section 22), is amended to read as follows:

Section 22. The following schedule of compensation is hereby established:

1. Permanent Total Disability. In case of total disability adjudged to be permanent, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages shall be paid to the employee during the continuance of such total disability.

2. Temporary Total Disability. (a) With respect to injuries occurring before November 4, 1994, in cases of temporary total disability, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages shall be paid to the employee during the continuance thereof,

(Bold face denotes Committee Amendments)

but not in excess of one hundred fifty (150) weeks, except as otherwise provided in the Workers' Compensation Act. Provided, after compensation has been paid for a period of one hundred forty (140) weeks, the employee may request a review of the case by a judge of the Workers' Compensation Court for continued temporary total disability benefits provided by the Workers' Compensation Act. Upon a finding that benefits should be extended beyond the initial one-hundred-fifty-week period, compensation may be continued for an additional one hundred fifty (150) weeks.

(b) With respect to injuries occurring on or after November 4, 1994, in cases of temporary total disability, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages shall be paid to the employee during the continuance thereof, but not in excess of fifty-two (52) weeks, except as otherwise provided in the Workers' Compensation Act. Provided, after compensation has been paid for a period of forty-two (42) weeks, the employee may request a review of the case by a judge of the Court for continued temporary total disability benefits provided by the Workers' Compensation Act. Upon a finding that benefits should be extended beyond the initial fifty-two-week period, compensation may be continued for additional successive fifty-two-week periods, provided the employee has requested review of the case at forty-two (42) weeks during each period involved, and upon a finding by the Court that benefits should be extended. Total

payments of compensation for temporary total disability may not exceed a maximum of three hundred (300) weeks in the aggregate.

(c) With respect to injuries occurring on or after November 1, 1997, total payments of compensation for temporary total disability may not exceed a maximum of one hundred fifty-six (156) weeks in the aggregate except for good cause shown, as determined by the Court. Total payments of compensation for temporary total disability, inclusive of consequential injuries, may not exceed a maximum of three hundred (300) weeks in the aggregate.

3. Permanent Partial Disability. (a) With respect to injuries occurring prior to November 4, 1994, in case of disability, partial in character but permanent in quality, the compensation shall be seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages, and shall be paid to the employee for the period named in the schedule, as follows:

Thumb: For the loss of thumb, sixty (60) weeks.

First Finger: For the loss of the first finger, commonly called the index finger, thirty-five (35) weeks.

Second Finger: For the loss of a second finger, thirty (30) weeks.

Third Finger: For the loss of a third finger, twenty (20) weeks.

Fourth Finger: For the loss of a fourth finger, commonly called the little finger, fifteen (15) weeks.

Phalange of Thumb or Finger: The loss of the first phalange of the thumb or finger shall be considered equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of such thumb or finger, and compensation shall be one-half (1/2) of the amount above specified; the loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire thumb or finger; provided, however, that in no case shall the amount received for more than one finger exceed the amount provided in this schedule for the loss of a hand.

Great Toe: For the loss of a great toe, thirty (30) weeks.

Other Toes: For the loss of one of the toes other than the great toe, ten (10) weeks.

Phalange of Toe: The loss of the first phalange of any toe shall be considered to be equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of the amount specified. The loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire toe.

Hand: For the loss of a hand, two hundred (200) weeks.

Arm: For the loss of an arm, two hundred fifty (250) weeks.

Foot: For the loss of a foot, two hundred (200) weeks.

Leg: For the loss of a leg, two hundred fifty (250) weeks.

Eye: For the loss of an eye, two hundred fifty (250) weeks.

Deafness: Deafness from industrial cause, including occupations which are hazardous to hearing, accident or sudden trauma, three hundred (300) weeks, and total deafness of one ear from industrial cause, including occupations which are hazardous to hearing, accident or sudden trauma, one hundred (100) weeks. Except as otherwise provided herein, any examining physician shall only evaluate deafness or hearing impairment in accordance with the latest publication of the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" in effect at the time of the injury. The Physician Advisory Committee may, pursuant to Section 201.1 of this title, recommend the adoption of a method or system to evaluate permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment". Such recommendation shall be made to the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court who may adopt the recommendation in part or in whole. The adopted method or system shall be submitted by the Administrator to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular session of the Legislature. Such method or system to evaluate permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" shall be subject to disapproval

in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Such method or system shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits the adopted method or system to the Legislature if the Legislature takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Legislature disapproves it in part. If adopted, permanent impairment shall be evaluated only in accordance with the latest version of the alternative method or system in effect at the time of injury. Except as otherwise provided in Section 11 of this title, all evaluations shall include an apportionment of injury causation. However, revisions to the guides made by the American Medical Association which are published after January 1, 1989, and before January 1, 1995, shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month of publication. Revisions to the guides made by the American Medical Association which are published after December 31, 1994, may be adopted in whole or in part by the Administrator following recommendation by the Physician Advisory Committee. Revisions adopted by the Administrator shall be submitted by the Administrator to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular session of the Legislature. Such

revisions shall be subject to disapproval in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Revisions shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits the revisions to the Legislature if the Legislature takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Legislature disapproves them in part. The examining physician shall not follow the guides based on race or ethnic origin. The examining physician shall not deviate from said guides or any alternative thereof except as may be specifically provided for in the guides or modifications to the guides or except as may be specifically provided for in any alternative or modifications thereto adopted by the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court as provided for in Section 201.1 of this title. The guides or modifications thereto or alternative system or method of evaluating permanent impairment or modifications thereto shall be the exclusive basis for testimony and conclusions with regard to deafness or hearing impairment.

Loss of Use: Permanent loss of use of a thumb, finger, toe, arm, hand, foot, leg or eye shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of such thumb, finger, toe, hand, arm, foot, leg or eye.

For the permanent partial loss of use of a member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's

average weekly wage during that portion of the number of weeks in the foregoing schedule provided for the loss of such member or sight of an eye which the partial loss of use thereof bears to the total loss of use of such member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye.

Amputations: Amputation between the elbow and the wrist shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of a hand. Amputation between the knee and the ankle shall be considered as the loss of a foot. Amputation at or above the elbow shall be considered as the loss of an arm. Amputation at or above the knee shall be considered as the loss of a leg.

The compensation for the foregoing specific injuries shall be in lieu of all other compensation except the benefits provided in Section 14 of this title and Section 16 of this title.

In case of an injury resulting in serious and permanent disfigurement, compensation shall be payable in an amount to be determined by the Court, but not in excess of Twenty Thousand Dollars ($20,000.00); provided, that compensation for permanent disfigurement shall not be in addition to the other compensation provided for in this section, but shall be taken into consideration in fixing the compensation otherwise provided.

Hernia: In case of an injury resulting in hernia, temporary total compensation for fourteen (14) weeks, and the cost of an operation shall be payable; provided, in any case where the injured

employee has been twice previously operated for hernia in the same area and it is established by opinion of a competent surgeon that further surgery in the same area will not result in full relief of the condition, the Court may then award compensation for disability resulting therefrom under paragraph 1 of this section, or, if not totally and permanently disabled, then under the "Other Cases" subdivision following, and, after a second surgical attempt to repair hernia, the injured may not be required to submit to further surgery in an effort to relieve the disability thereafter existing; provided, further, the use of any artificial reinforcement or device, with or without surgery, shall not be the basis of reducing extent of disability to be awarded.

Other Cases: In all other classes of disabilities, excluding only those heretofore referred to in paragraph 3 of this section, which disabilities result in loss of use of any portion of an employee's body, and which disabilities are permanent in quality but partial in character, disability shall mean the percentage of permanent impairment. The compensation ordered paid shall be seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wage for the number of weeks which the partial disability of the employee bears to five hundred (500) weeks.

(b) With respect to injuries occurring after November 4, 1994, through December 31, 2001, in case of disability, partial in

character but permanent in quality, the compensation shall be seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages, and shall be paid to the employee for the period prescribed by the following schedule:

(1) For each percent of the first nine percent (9%) of disability, eighty percent (80%) of the number of weeks of compensation provided by law prior to November 4, 1994;

(2) For each percent of the next eleven percent (11%) of disability, the identical number of weeks of compensation provided by law prior to November 4, 1994;

(3) For each percent of the next thirty percent (30%) of disability, one hundred twenty percent (120%) of the number of weeks of compensation provided by law prior to November 4, 1994; and

(4) For each remaining percent of disability, the identical number of weeks of compensation provided by law prior to November 4, 1994.

(c) With respect to injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2002, through December 31, 2002, in case of disability, partial in character but permanent in quality, the compensation shall be seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wages, and shall be paid to the employee for the period prescribed by the following schedule:

Thumb: For the loss of thumb, sixty-three (63) weeks.

First Finger: For the loss of the first finger, commonly called the index finger, thirty-seven (37) weeks.

Second Finger: For the loss of a second finger, thirty-two (32) weeks.

Third Finger: For the loss of a third finger, twenty-one (21) weeks.

Fourth Finger: For the loss of a fourth finger, commonly called the little finger, sixteen (16) weeks.

Phalange of Thumb or Finger: The loss of the first phalange of the thumb or finger shall be considered equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of such thumb or finger, and compensation shall be one-half (1/2) of the amount above specified; the loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire thumb or finger; provided, however, that in no case shall the amount received for more than one finger exceed the amount provided in this schedule for the loss of a hand.

Great Toe: For the loss of a great toe, thirty-two (32) weeks.

Other Toes: For the loss of one of the toes other than the great toe, eleven (11) weeks.

Phalange of Toe: The loss of the first phalange of any toe shall be considered to be equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of the amount specified. The loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire toe.

Hand: For the loss of a hand, two hundred ten (210) weeks.

Arm: For the loss of an arm, two hundred sixty-three (263) weeks.

Foot: For the loss of a foot, two hundred ten (210) weeks.

Leg: For the loss of a leg, two hundred sixty-three (263) weeks.

Eye: For the loss of an eye, two hundred sixty-three (263) weeks.

Deafness: Deafness from industrial cause, including occupations which are hazardous to hearing, accident or sudden trauma, three hundred fifteen (315) weeks, and total deafness of one ear from industrial cause, including occupations which are hazardous to hearing, accident or sudden trauma, one hundred five (105) weeks. Except as otherwise provided herein, any examining physician shall only evaluate deafness or hearing impairment in accordance with the latest publication of the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" in effect at the time of the injury. The Physician Advisory Committee may, pursuant to Section 201.1 of this title, recommend the adoption of a method or system to evaluate permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment". Such recommendation shall be made to the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court who may

adopt the recommendation in part or in whole. The adopted method or system shall be submitted by the Administrator to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular session of the Legislature. Such method or system to evaluate permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" shall be subject to disapproval in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Such method or system shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits the adopted method or system to the Legislature if the Legislature takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Legislature disapproves it in part. If adopted, permanent impairment shall be evaluated only in accordance with the latest version of the alternative method or system in effect at the time of injury. Except as otherwise provided in Section 11 of this title, all evaluations shall include an apportionment of injury causation. However, revisions to the guides made by the American Medical Association which are published after January 1, 1989, and before January 1, 1995, shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month of

publication. Revisions to the guides made by the American Medical Association which are published after December 31, 1994, may be adopted in whole or in part by the Administrator following recommendation by the Physician Advisory Committee. Revisions adopted by the Administrator shall be submitted by the Administrator to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular session of the Legislature. Such revisions shall be subject to disapproval in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Revisions shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits the revisions to the Legislature if the Legislature takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Legislature disapproves them in part. The examining physician shall not follow the guides based on race or ethnic origin. The examining physician shall not deviate from such guides or any alternative thereof except as may be specifically provided for in the guides or modifications to the guides or except as may be specifically provided for in any alternative or modifications thereto adopted by the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court as provided in Section 201.1 of this title. The guides or modifications thereto or alternative system or

method of evaluating permanent impairment or modifications thereto shall be the exclusive basis for testimony and conclusions with regard to deafness or hearing impairment.

Loss of Use: Permanent loss of use of a thumb, finger, toe, arm, hand, foot, leg or eye shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of such thumb, finger, toe, hand, arm, foot, leg or eye.

For the permanent partial loss of use of a member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wage during that portion of the number of weeks in the foregoing schedule provided for the loss of such member or sight of an eye which the partial loss of use thereof bears to the total loss of use of such member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye.

Amputations: Amputation between the elbow and the wrist shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of a hand. Amputation between the knee and the ankle shall be considered as the loss of a foot. Amputation at or above the elbow shall be considered as the loss of an arm. Amputation at or above the knee shall be considered as the loss of a leg.

The compensation for the foregoing specific injuries shall be in lieu of all other compensation except the benefits provided in Section 14 of this title and Section 16 of this title.

In case of an injury resulting in serious and permanent disfigurement, compensation shall be payable in an amount to be

determined by the Court, but not in excess of Twenty Thousand Dollars ($20,000.00); provided, that compensation for permanent disfigurement shall not be in addition to the other compensation provided for in this section but shall be taken into consideration in fixing the compensation otherwise provided.

Hernia: In case of an injury resulting in hernia, temporary total compensation for six (6) weeks, and the cost of an operation shall be payable, unless the employee has not been released from active medical treatment, temporary total compensation not to exceed nine (9) weeks, and the cost of an operation shall be payable; provided, in any case where the injured employee has been twice previously operated on for hernia in the same area and it is established by opinion of a competent surgeon that further surgery in the same area will not result in full relief of the condition, the Court may then award compensation for disability resulting therefrom under paragraph 1 of this section, or, if not totally and permanently disabled, then under the "Other Cases" subdivision following, and, after a second surgical attempt to repair hernia, the injured may not be required to submit to further surgery in an effort to relieve the disability thereafter existing; provided further, the use of any artificial reinforcement or device, with or without surgery, shall not be the basis of reducing extent of disability to be awarded.

1 Other Cases: In all other classes of disabilities, excluding
2 only those heretofore referred to in this paragraph, which
3 disabilities result in loss of use of any portion of an employee's
4 body, and which disabilities are partial in character but permanent
5 in quality, disability shall mean the percentage of permanent
6 impairment. The compensation ordered paid shall be seventy percent
7 (70%) of the employee's average weekly wage for the number of weeks
8 which the partial disability of the employee bears to five hundred
9 (500) weeks.
10 (d) With respect to injuries occurring on or after January 1,
11 2003, in case of disability, partial in character but permanent in
12 quality, the compensation shall be seventy percent (70%) of the
13 employee's average weekly wages, and shall be paid to the employee
14 for the period prescribed by the following schedule:
15 Thumb: For the loss of thumb, sixty-six (66) weeks.
16 First Finger: For the loss of the first finger, commonly called
17 the index finger, thirty-nine (39) weeks.
18 Second Finger: For the loss of a second finger, thirty-three
19 (33) weeks.
20 Third Finger: For the loss of a third finger, twenty-two (22)
21 weeks.
22 Fourth Finger: For the loss of a fourth finger, commonly called
23 the little finger, seventeen (17) weeks.

Phalange of Thumb or Finger: The loss of the first phalange of the thumb or finger shall be considered equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of such thumb or finger, and compensation shall be one-half (1/2) of the amount above specified; the loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire thumb or finger; provided, however, that in no case shall the amount received for more than one finger exceed the amount provided in this schedule for the loss of a hand.

Great Toe: For the loss of a great toe, thirty-three (33) weeks.

Other Toes: For the loss of one of the toes other than the great toe, eleven (11) weeks.

Phalange of Toe: The loss of the first phalange of any toe shall be considered to be equal to the loss of one-half (1/2) of the amount specified. The loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the entire toe.

Hand: For the loss of a hand, two hundred twenty (220) weeks.

Arm: For the loss of an arm, two hundred seventy-five (275) weeks.

Foot: For the loss of a foot, two hundred twenty (220) weeks.

Leg: For the loss of a leg, two hundred seventy-five (275) weeks.

1 Eye: For the loss of an eye, two hundred seventy-five (275)
2 weeks.
3 Deafness: Deafness from industrial cause, including occupations
4 which are hazardous to hearing, accident or sudden trauma, three
5 hundred thirty (330) weeks, and total deafness of one ear from
6 industrial cause, including occupations which are hazardous to
7 hearing, accident or sudden trauma, one hundred ten (110) weeks.
8 Except as otherwise provided herein, any examining physician shall
9 only evaluate deafness or hearing impairment in accordance with the
10 latest publication of the American Medical Association's "Guides to
11 the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" in effect at the time of the
12 injury. The Physician Advisory Committee may, pursuant to Section
13 201.1 of this title, recommend the adoption of a method or system to
14 evaluate permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in
15 combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the
16 Evaluation of Permanent Impairment". Such recommendation shall be
17 made to the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court who may
18 adopt the recommendation in part or in whole. The adopted method or
19 system shall be submitted by the Administrator to the Governor, the
20 Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of
21 the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular
22 session of the Legislature. Such method or system to evaluate
23 permanent impairment that shall be used in place of or in

1 combination with the American Medical Association's "Guides to the
2 Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" shall be subject to disapproval
3 in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the
4 Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Such
5 method or system shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days
6 after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits
7 the adopted method or system to the Legislature if the Legislature
8 takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day
9 of the month in which the Legislature disapproves it in part. If
10 adopted, permanent impairment shall be evaluated only in accordance
11 with the latest version of the alternative method or system in
12 effect at the time of injury. Except as otherwise provided in
13 Section 11 of this title, all evaluations shall include an
14 apportionment of injury causation. However, revisions to the guides
15 made by the American Medical Association which are published after
16 January 1, 1989, and before January 1, 1995, shall be operative one
17 hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month of
18 publication. Revisions to the guides made by the American Medical
19 Association which are published after December 31, 1994, may be
20 adopted in whole or in part by the Administrator following
21 recommendation by the Physician Advisory Committee. Revisions
22 adopted by the Administrator shall be submitted by the Administrator
23 to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and

President Pro Tempore of the Senate within the first ten (10) legislative days of a regular session of the Legislature. Such revisions shall be subject to disapproval in whole or in part by joint or concurrent resolution of the Legislature during the legislative session in which submitted. Revisions shall be operative one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Administrator submits the revisions to the Legislature if the Legislature takes no action or one hundred twenty (120) days after the last day of the month in which the Legislature disapproves them in part. The examining physician shall not follow the guides based on race or ethnic origin. The examining physician shall not deviate from such guides or any alternative thereof except as may be specifically provided for in the guides or modifications to the guides or except as may be specifically provided for in any alternative or modifications thereto adopted by the Administrator of the Workers' Compensation Court as provided in Section 201.1 of this title. The guides or modifications thereto or alternative system or method of evaluating permanent impairment or modifications thereto shall be the exclusive basis for testimony and conclusions with regard to deafness or hearing impairment.

Loss of Use: Permanent loss of use of a thumb, finger, toe, arm, hand, foot, leg or eye shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of such thumb, finger, toe, hand, arm, foot, leg or eye.

For the permanent partial loss of use of a member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye, seventy percent (70%) of the employee's average weekly wage during that portion of the number of weeks in the foregoing schedule provided for the loss of such member or sight of an eye which the partial loss of use thereof bears to the total loss of use of such member, loss of hearing or sight of an eye.

Amputations: Amputation between the elbow and the wrist shall be considered as the equivalent of the loss of a hand. Amputation between the knee and the ankle shall be considered as the loss of a foot. Amputation at or above the elbow shall be considered as the loss of an arm. Amputation at or above the knee shall be considered as the loss of a leg.

The compensation for the foregoing specific injuries shall be in lieu of all other compensation except the benefits provided in Section 14 of this title and Section 16 of this title.

In case of an injury resulting in serious and permanent disfigurement, compensation shall be payable in an amount to be determined by the Court, but not in excess of Twenty Thousand Dollars ($20,000.00) for an injury occurring before November 1, 2005, and not in excess of Fifty Thousand Dollars ($50,000.00) for an injury occurring on or after November 1, 2005; provided, that compensation for permanent disfigurement shall not be in addition to the other compensation provided for in this section but shall be

taken into consideration in fixing the compensation otherwise provided.

Hernia: In case of an injury resulting in hernia, temporary total compensation for six (6) weeks, and all necessary medical costs including, but not limited to, the cost of an operation shall be payable. A claimant who has had surgery for a hernia may petition the court for one extension of temporary total compensation and the court may order such an extension, not to exceed six (6) additional weeks, if the treating physician indicates such an extension is appropriate, or as agreed to by all parties.

Soft Tissue Injury: In case of a nonsurgical soft tissue injury, temporary total compensation shall not exceed eight (8) weeks. A claimant who has been recommended by a treating physician for surgery for a soft tissue injury, or who has had surgery for a soft tissue injury as a result of a recommendation by a treating physician, may petition the Court for one extension of temporary total compensation and the court may order such an extension, not to exceed sixteen (16) additional weeks, if the treating physician indicates that such an extension is appropriate or as agreed to by all parties. In the event the surgery is not recommended, or is recommended but not performed within ninety (90) days after the recommendation, the benefits for the extension period shall be terminated. For purposes of this section, "soft tissue injury"

means damage to one or more of the tissues that surround bones and joints. "Soft tissue injury" includes, but is not limited to: sprains, strains, contusions, tendonitis, and muscle tears. Cumulative trauma is to be considered a soft tissue injury. "Soft tissue injury" does not include any of the following:

(1) Injury to or disease of the spine, spinal disks, spinal nerves or spinal cord, where corrective surgery is performed;

(2) Brain or closed-head injury as evidenced by:

a. sensory or motor disturbances,

b. communication disturbances,

c. complex integrated disturbances of cerebral function,

d. episodic neurological disorders, or

e. other brain and closed-head injury conditions at least as severe in nature as any condition provided in subdivisions a through d of this division; or

(3) Total knee replacement.

In all cases of soft tissue injury, the employee shall only be entitled to appropriate and necessary medical care and temporary total disability as set out in ~~paragraph 2 of this section,~~ <u>this subparagraph. The employee shall not be entitled to permanent impairment</u> unless there is objective medical evidence of a permanent anatomical abnormality. In determining the existence of such an abnormality, the Court may consider if there is credible medical

1 evidence that the ability of the employee to earn wages at the same
2 level as before the injury has been permanently impaired.
3 Other Cases: In all other classes of disabilities, excluding
4 only those heretofore referred to in this paragraph, which
5 disabilities result in loss of use of any portion of an employee's
6 body, and which disabilities are partial in character but permanent
7 in quality, disability shall mean the percentage of permanent
8 impairment. The compensation ordered paid shall be seventy percent
9 (70%) of the employee's average weekly wage for the number of weeks
10 which the partial disability of the employee bears to five hundred
11 (500) weeks. No permanent disability shall be awarded unless there
12 is objective medical evidence, as defined in Section 3 of this
13 title, of a permanent anatomical abnormality. In determining the
14 existence of such an abnormality, the Court may consider if there is
15 credible medical evidence that the ability of the employee to earn
16 wages at the same level as before the injury has been permanently
17 impaired.
18 4. Temporary Partial Disability. (a) With respect to injuries
19 occurring before November 4, 1994, in case of temporary partial
20 disability, except the particular cases mentioned in paragraph 3 of
21 this section, an injured employee shall receive seventy percent
22 (70%) of the difference between the employee's average weekly wages
23 and the employee's wage-earning capacity thereafter in the same

1 employment or otherwise, if less than before the injury, during
2 continuance of such partial disability, but not to exceed one
3 hundred fifty (150) weeks. Provided, after compensation has been
4 paid for a period of one hundred forty (140) weeks, the employee may
5 request a review of the case by a judge of the Court for continued
6 temporary partial disability benefits provided by the Workers'
7 Compensation Act. Upon a finding that benefits should be extended
8 beyond the initial one-hundred-fifty-week period, compensation may
9 be continued for an additional one hundred fifty (150) weeks.
10 (b) With respect to injuries occurring on or after November 4,
11 1994, in case of temporary partial disability, except the particular
12 cases mentioned in paragraph 3 of this section, an injured employee
13 shall receive seventy percent (70%) of the difference between the
14 employee's average weekly wages and the employee's wage-earning
15 capacity thereafter in the same employment or otherwise, if less
16 than before the injury, during continuance of such partial
17 disability, but not to exceed fifty-two (52) weeks. Provided, after
18 compensation has been paid for a period of forty-two (42) weeks, the
19 employee may request a review of the case by a judge of the Court
20 for continued temporary partial disability benefits provided by the
21 Workers' Compensation Act. Upon a finding that benefits should be
22 extended beyond the initial fifty-two-week period, compensation may
23 be continued for additional successive fifty-two-week periods

provided the employee has requested review of the case at forty-two (42) weeks during each period involved, and upon a finding by the Court that benefits should be extended. Total payments of compensation for temporary partial disability may not exceed a maximum of three hundred (300) weeks in the aggregate.

(c) With respect to injuries occurring on or after November 1, 1997, total payments of compensation for temporary partial disability may not exceed a maximum of one hundred fifty-six (156) weeks in the aggregate except for good cause shown, as determined by the Court. Total payments of compensation for temporary partial disability, inclusive of consequential injuries, may not exceed a maximum of three hundred (300) weeks in the aggregate.

5. Notwithstanding any other section of the Workers' Compensation Act, temporary disability shall be payable without an award by the Court. The first payment of temporary disability compensation shall become due on the tenth day after the employer has received notice of injury as specified in Section 24.2 of this title. All compensation owed on that date shall be paid and thereafter payments shall be made weekly except when otherwise ordered by the Court.

If any compensation payments owed without an award are not paid within ten (10) days after becoming due, there shall be added to such owed payments an amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the

amount due which shall be paid at the same time in addition to the owed payments unless such nonpayment is excused by the Court after a showing by the employer that conditions exist over which the employer had no control in that either payments were not made within the prescribed time or the employer denies coverage within the time specified for the employer to respond.

6. Limitation. The compensation payments under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act shall not exceed the sum of seventy-five percent (75%) of the state's average weekly wage as determined by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the sum of ninety percent (90%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1995, for injuries occurring after December 31, 1994, and the sum of one hundred percent (100%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1996, for injuries occurring after December 31, 1995, for temporary disability; Sixty Dollars ($60.00) per week beginning as of the effective date of the Workers' Compensation Act, and Seventy Dollars ($70.00) per week beginning January 1, 1979, and Eighty Dollars ($80.00) per week beginning January 1, 1980, and Ninety Dollars ($90.00) per week beginning January 1, 1981, and to fifty percent (50%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1982, for permanent partial disability; Seventy-five Dollars ($75.00) per week beginning as of the effective date of the Workers' Compensation Act, and Ninety

Dollars ($90.00) per week beginning January 1, 1979, and One Hundred Ten Dollars ($110.00) per week beginning January 1, 1980, to sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1981, to seventy-five percent (75%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning September 1, 1992, to ninety percent (90%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1995, for injuries occurring after December 31, 1994, and to one hundred percent (100%) of the state's average weekly wage beginning January 1, 1996, for injuries occurring after December 31, 1995, for permanent total disability, or at any time be less than Thirty Dollars ($30.00) per week; provided, however, that if the employee's wages at the time of the injury are less than Thirty Dollars ($30.00) per week, the employee shall receive the employee's full weekly wages; provided further, that the compensation received, as provided for temporary partial disability, shall not, when added to the wages received by such employee after such injury, amount to a greater sum than eighty percent (80%) of the average weekly wages of the employee received prior to said injury.

The average weekly wage in this state shall be determined by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission every three (3) years beginning July 1, 1984, and shall be used to establish maximum benefits under the Workers' Compensation Act for injuries occurring during a three-year period, which period shall begin on the first

day of November after publication by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission. For the purpose of computing benefits payable under the Workers' Compensation Act, the state's average weekly wage shall be rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

The benefit level for members of the National Guard and any authorized voluntary or uncompensated worker rendering services as a fire fighter, peace officer or civil defense worker shall be determined by using the earnings of the individual in the individual's regular occupation.

7. Previous Disability. The fact that an employee has suffered previous disability or impairment or received compensation therefor shall not preclude the employee from compensation for a later accidental personal injury or occupational disease; but in determining compensation for the later accidental personal injury or occupational disease the employee's average weekly wages shall be such sum as will reasonably represent the employee's earning capacity at the time of the later accidental personal injury or occupational disease. In the event there exists a previous impairment, including a previous non-work-related injury or condition which produced permanent disability and the same is aggravated or accelerated by an accidental personal injury or occupational disease, compensation for permanent disability shall be only for such amount as was caused by such accidental personal

injury or occupational disease and no additional compensation shall be allowed for the pre-existing disability or impairment. The sum of all permanent partial disability awards, excluding awards against the Multiple Injury Trust Fund and awards for amputations, and surgeries, shall not exceed one hundred percent (100%) permanent partial disability for any individual. An individual may not receive more than five hundred twenty (520) weeks' compensation for permanent partial disability, but may receive other benefits under the Workers' Compensation Act if otherwise eligible as provided in the Workers' Compensation Act.

8. Income benefits for death. If the injury or occupational disease causes death, income benefits shall be payable in the amount and for the benefit of the persons following, subject to the maximum limits specified hereafter:

(a) Benefit amounts for particular classes of dependents.

(1) If there is a surviving spouse, to such surviving spouse seventy percent (70%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was earning. In no event shall this spousal income benefit be diminished.

(2) If there is a child or children, to such child or children fifteen percent (15%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was earning for each child. Where there are more than two such children, the income benefits payable for the benefit of all

children shall be divided among all children, to share and share alike, subject to the provisions of subparagraphs (c) and (d) of this paragraph.

(3) In addition to the benefits theretofore paid or due, two (2) years' indemnity benefit in one lump sum shall be payable to a surviving spouse upon remarriage.

(4) To the children, if there is no surviving spouse, fifty percent (50%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was earning for one child, and twenty percent (20%) of such wage for each additional child, divided among all children, to share and share alike, subject to the provisions of subparagraphs (c) and (d) of this paragraph.

(5) The income benefits payable for the benefit of any child under this section shall cease:

a. when the child dies, marries, or reaches the age of eighteen (18),

b. when the child over eighteen (18) years of age ceases to be physically or mentally incapable of self-support,

c. when the actually dependent child ceases to be actually dependent, or

d. when the child has been enrolled as a full-time student in any accredited educational institution or

has been receiving education by other means, including education at home pursuant to Section 4 of Article XIII of the Oklahoma Constitution, and the child ceases to be so enrolled or educated or reaches twenty-three (23) years of age. A child who originally qualified as a dependent by virtue of being less than eighteen (18) years of age may, upon reaching eighteen (18) years of age, continue to qualify if the child satisfies the tests of being physically or mentally incapable of self-support, actually dependent, or enrolled in an accredited educational institution or being educated by other means, including education at home pursuant to Section 4 of Article XIII of the Oklahoma Constitution.

(6) To each parent, if actually dependent, twenty-five percent (25%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was earning subject to the provisions of subparagraphs (c) and (d) of this paragraph.

(7) To the brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, if actually dependent, twenty-five percent (25%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was earning to each such dependent. If there should be more than one of such dependents, the total income benefits payable for the benefit of such dependents shall be divided

1 to share and share alike subject to the provisions of subparagraphs
2 (c) and (d) of this paragraph.
3 (8) The income benefits of each beneficiary under divisions (6)
4 and (7) above shall be paid until the beneficiary, if a parent or
5 grandparent, dies, marries or ceases to be actually dependent, or,
6 if a brother, sister or grandchild, dies, marries or reaches the age
7 of eighteen (18), is over the age of eighteen (18) and ceases to be
8 physically or mentally incapable of self-support or ceases to be
9 actually dependent.
10 (9) A person ceases to be actually dependent when the person's
11 income from all sources exclusive of workers' compensation income
12 benefits is such that, if it had existed at the time the original
13 determination of actual dependency was made, it would not have
14 supported a finding of dependency. If the present annual income of
15 an actually dependent person including workers' compensation income
16 benefits at any time exceeds the total annual support received by
17 the person from the deceased employee, the workers' compensation
18 benefits shall be reduced so that the total annual income is no
19 greater than such amount of annual support received from the
20 deceased employee. In all cases, a person found to be actually
21 dependent shall be presumed to be no longer actually dependent three
22 (3) years after the time as of which the person was found to be
23 actually dependent. This presumption may be overcome by proof of

1 continued actual dependency as defined in this paragraph and
2 paragraph (1) of Section 3.1 of this title.
3 (b) Change in dependents. Upon the cessation of income
4 benefits under this section to or for the benefit of any person, the
5 income benefits payable to the remaining persons who continue to be
6 entitled to income benefits for the unexpired part of the period
7 during which their income benefits are payable shall be that which
8 such persons would have received if they had been the only persons
9 entitled to income benefits at the time of the decedent's death.
10 (c) Maximum income benefits for death. For the purposes of
11 this section, the average weekly wage of the employee shall be taken
12 as not more than the average weekly wage of the state. If the
13 average weekly wages of the employee are equal to or greater than
14 the average weekly wage of the state, then the aggregate weekly
15 income benefits payable to all beneficiaries under this section
16 shall not exceed the average weekly wage of the state. If the
17 average weekly wages of the employee are less than the average
18 weekly wage of the state, the aggregate weekly income benefits
19 payable to all beneficiaries under this section shall not exceed one
20 hundred percent (100%) of the average weekly wages of the employee.
21 (d) Maximum total payment. The maximum weekly income benefits
22 payable for all beneficiaries in case of death shall not exceed one
23 hundred percent (100%) of the average weekly wages the deceased was

earning, subject to the maximum limits in subparagraph (c) of this paragraph. The maximum aggregate limitation shall not apply in case of payment of two (2) years' income benefits to the surviving spouse upon remarriage, as provided under division (3) of subparagraph (a) of this paragraph, to prevent the immediate recalculation and payments of benefits to the remaining beneficiaries as provided under subparagraph (b) of this paragraph. The weekly income benefits as recalculated to the remaining beneficiaries shall not exceed the weekly benefit that was or would have been payable for total permanent disability to the deceased. The classes of beneficiaries specified in divisions (1), (2) and (4) of subparagraph (a) of this paragraph shall have priority over all other beneficiaries in the apportionment of income benefits. If the provisions of this subparagraph should prevent payments to other beneficiaries of the income benefits to the full extent otherwise provided for by this section, the gross remaining amount of income benefits payable to such other beneficiaries shall be apportioned by class, proportionate to the interest of each class in the remaining amount. Parents shall be considered to be in one class and those specified in division (7) of subparagraph (a) of this paragraph in a separate class.

9. Where some pecuniary loss may be shown by heirs-at-law of the deceased, as defined by the descent and distribution statutes of

Oklahoma, who are otherwise not entitled to receive benefits under other provisions of this section, such heirs-at-law shall receive compensation for their pecuniary loss not to exceed an aggregate of Five Thousand Dollars ($5,000.00).

10. For deaths occurring before November 1, 2005, in the event that no benefits under other provisions of this section are paid to the dependents or the heirs-at-law of the deceased, an amount not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars ($5,000.00) shall be paid for funeral expenses. For deaths occurring on or after November 1, 2005, in the event that no benefits under other provisions of this section are paid to the dependents or the heirs-at-law of the deceased, an amount not to exceed Eight Thousand Dollars ($8,000.00) shall be paid for funeral expenses.

11. (a) For deaths occurring before January 1, 1995, if there is a surviving spouse and surviving children entitled to receive death benefits herein, such survivors shall be entitled to an immediate lump-sum payment of Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00) to the spouse and Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($2,500.00) to each surviving child not to exceed two children. For deaths occurring after December 31, 1994, if there is a surviving spouse and surviving children entitled to receive death benefits herein, such survivors shall be entitled to an immediate lump-sum payment of Twenty Thousand Dollars ($20,000.00) to the spouse and Five Thousand

1 Dollars ($5,000.00) to each surviving child not to exceed two
2 children. For deaths occurring on or after November 1, 2005, if
3 there is a surviving spouse and surviving children entitled to
4 receive death benefits herein, such survivors shall be entitled to
5 an immediate lump-sum payment of One Hundred Thousand Dollars
6 ($100,000.00) to the spouse and Twenty-five Thousand Dollars
7 ($25,000.00) to each surviving child not to exceed two children. In
8 addition, the survivors shall be entitled to receive funeral
9 benefits in an amount not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars
10 ($10,000.00).
11 (b) For deaths occurring before November 1, 2005, if there is
12 no surviving spouse but there are surviving children entitled to
13 receive death benefits herein, such surviving children shall be
14 entitled to a lump-sum payment of Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00)
15 to be divided among all the children to share and share alike. For
16 deaths occurring on or after November 1, 2005, if there is no
17 surviving spouse but there are surviving children entitled to
18 receive death benefits herein, each surviving child shall be
19 entitled to a lump-sum payment of Twenty-five Thousand Dollars
20 ($25,000.00), provided the total amount of lump-sum payments shall
21 not exceed One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($150,000.00), to be
22 divided among all the children to share and share alike. The

survivors shall also be entitled to receive funeral benefits in an amount not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00).

(c) Any claim under this paragraph shall be substantiated by the filing of a properly executed and authenticated proof of loss, which form shall be prescribed by the Administrator, and payment of such sum shall be made within fifteen (15) days after adjudication of entitlement by the Court. Such sum shall not be subject to any award of attorney fees in uncontested cases, except the Court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to represent known and unknown minor children and said guardian ad litem shall be paid a reasonable fee for the services.

Provided, that all judgments rendered awarding lump-sum death benefits, except lump-sum attorney fee awards, may, at the discretion of the Court, provide that said benefits be paid in trust to an interest-bearing account in a federally insured banking institution in the county wherein the judgment was rendered. The banking institution may make appropriate charges to the beneficiary for costs of trust management. These charges shall be fixed by agreement of such institution and the judge rendering the judgment. The judgment awarding lump-sum death benefits shall contain instructions for regularly scheduled disbursements to be fixed by the Court which may be modified by the Court upon a proper showing of change of circumstance. The banking institution shall issue a

numbered receipt to the person paying the benefits into trust and deliver a copy of the receipt to the Administrator. Each banking institution receiving trust funds for deposit shall receive a schedule of disbursements and shall monthly pay said disbursements to the beneficiary as ordered by the Court. An annual accounting of all such trust funds received and deposited shall be rendered by each banking institution to the Court granting the judgment.

12. No payments on any permanent impairment order shall start until payments on any pre-existing permanent impairment orders have been completed.

13. (a) Any employee convicted of a misdemeanor or felony and sentenced to a term of incarceration of at least ninety (90) days in this state or in any other jurisdiction shall have all benefits for temporary total disability awarded by the Workers' Compensation Court forfeited by order of the Court on motion of the employer or the employer's insurer after confirmation of the employee's incarceration. The Court also may order the forfeiture of such benefits on its own motion upon receipt of notice from the Director of the Department of Corrections that the person awarded the benefits is incarcerated as an inmate in a facility operated by or under contract with the Department. The provisions of this subparagraph shall not apply to any benefits awarded to an inmate for compensable injuries sustained by the inmate while in the employ

of a private for-profit employer or while employed in private prison industries, involving a for-profit employer, which deal in interstate commerce or which sell products or services to the federal government.

(b) Any employee convicted of a misdemeanor or felony and sentenced to a term of incarceration of at least ninety (90) days in this state shall have all benefits for permanent total disability or temporary partial disability awarded by the Workers' Compensation Court and paid during the period of incarceration deposited to the credit of an account established pursuant to Section 549 of Title 57 of the Oklahoma Statutes for distribution in full to the Department of Corrections for costs of incarceration. The State Board of Corrections shall have the power to collect workers' compensation benefits on behalf of the prisoner as provided in this subparagraph and to distribute the benefits as provided by law.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2009.

COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, dated 3-31-09 - DO PASS, As Amended and Coauthored.