

CLIENT ALERT: Recent Amendments to Rhode Island Employment Laws Require Employer Action

The Rhode Island General Assembly recently enacted several amendments to existing employment laws that will impact employers immediately and into 2026. These changes include expanded anti-discrimination protections, new onboarding notice requirements, and minimum wage increases.

Expanded Anti-Discrimination Protections for Menopause

On June 24, 2025, Governor Daniel McKee signed **legislation** amending the Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act to expressly prohibit discrimination based on menopause. The law, effective immediately, builds on existing protections for pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions. The amendment also expands the definition of “related conditions” to include “the need to manage the effects of vasomotor symptoms.”

The Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act requires employers to notify employees of their rights to reasonable accommodation and to be free from discrimination in the workplace by posting a notice conspicuously in the workplace and by distributing the notice directly to employees. With this recent amendment, employers must update their policies to include these new protections for redistribution to employees and posting in the workplace.

New Hire Notice Requirement Under the Rhode Island Payment of Wages Act

Effective January 1, 2026, Rhode Island employers must provide all newly hired employees with a written notice containing key employment terms, in accordance with **amendments** to the Rhode Island Payment of Wages Act. The notice, which must be provided in English, must include:

1. The employee’s rate of pay, pay basis, pay frequency (e.g. hourly, daily, weekly, commission, salary, etc.), and the specific application of any additional rates;
2. Any allowances claimed for meals and lodging;
3. All employer policies on sick and vacation time, personal leave, holidays, and hours;
4. The employee’s employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time) and whether they are exempt from minimum wage and/or overtime;
5. A list of deductions that may be made from the employee’s pay;
6. The number of days in the employee’s pay period, their regularly scheduled payday, and the date on which the employee will receive their first paycheck;
7. The employer’s legal name and any operating names;
8. The physical and mailing addresses of the employer’s principal place of business;
9. The employer’s telephone number.

The notice must be signed by the employee, and a copy must be retained by the employer. Employers that fail to comply may be subject to fines and penalties. The fine for a first or second violation is \$400. Subsequent penalties are considered misdemeanors, subject to a minimum penalty of \$400 and/or imprisonment of up to one year.

Minimum Wage Increase Effective January 1, 2026

As part of the state’s ongoing wage reform efforts, Rhode Island’s minimum wage will increase from \$15.00 to \$16.00 per hour effective January 1, 2026, with an additional increase to \$17.00 per hour scheduled for January 1, 2027. This **legislation** follows the previously enacted step increases signed into law in 2021, which resulted in a set of annual increases over a four-year period.

Next Steps

Employers with Rhode Island-based employees should review and update their policies and practices related to onboarding, pay practices, and discrimination and harassment. Should you have any questions about Rhode Island employment policies, please contact your MBJ attorney.

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