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S.221

Introduced by Senators Sirotkin, Balint, Clarkson, Pearson and Ram Hinsdale

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Labor; unemployment insurance; benefits

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a temporary supplemental benefit of \$25.00 per week for unemployment insurance claimants and, following the expiration of the supplemental benefit, to permanently increase the unemployment insurance weekly benefit amount.

An act relating to unemployment insurance benefits

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Repeal of Provisions from 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 51 * * *

Sec. 1. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 51, Sec. 17(a)(4) is amended to read:

(4) Sec. 12 (repeal of supplemental weekly benefit) shall take effect ~~upon the payment of a cumulative total of \$100,000,000.00 in supplemental benefits pursuant to 21 V.S.A. § 1338(e)(2) on October 7, 2021~~ and shall apply prospectively to all benefit payments in the next week and each subsequent week.

1 * * * Temporary Unemployment Insurance Supplemental Benefit * * *

2 Sec. 2. 21 V.S.A. § 1341 is added to read:

3 § 1341. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL
4 BENEFIT

5 (a) Beginning on July 1, 2022, in addition to the amount of regular
6 unemployment insurance benefits provided pursuant to section 1338 of this
7 title, each individual who qualifies for benefits pursuant to the provisions of
8 this chapter shall receive a separate supplemental benefit of \$25.00 each week.

9 (b) Benefits provided pursuant to this section shall be paid from the
10 Unemployment Insurance COVID-19 Supplemental Benefit Special Fund
11 established pursuant to section 1342 of this chapter.

12 Sec. 3. 21 V.S.A. § 1342 is added to read:

13 § 1342. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL
14 BENEFIT SPECIAL FUND

15 There is established the Unemployment Insurance COVID-19 Supplemental
16 Benefit Special Fund, which shall be managed in accordance with 32 V.S.A.
17 chapter 7, subchapter 5. The Fund shall consist of any amounts appropriated to
18 the Fund. The Commissioner may seek and accept grants from any source,
19 public or private, to be dedicated for deposit into the Special Fund. The
20 Commissioner shall use the Fund to provide the Supplemental Benefit
21 established pursuant to section 1341 of this chapter and to pay all necessary

1 costs associated with the administration of the Supplemental Benefit and of the
2 Fund.

3 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION

4 \$7,800,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
5 – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Unemployment Insurance
6 COVID-19 Supplemental Benefit Special Fund established pursuant to
7 21 V.S.A. § 1342.

8 Sec. 5. REPEALS

9 21 V.S.A. § 1341 (Unemployment Insurance COVID-19 Supplemental
10 Benefit) and 21 V.S.A. § 1342 (Unemployment Insurance COVID-19
11 Supplemental Benefit Special Fund) are repealed on July 1, 2024.

12 * * * Future Increase in Unemployment Insurance Benefits * * *

13 Sec. 6. 21 V.S.A. § 1338 is amended to read:

14 § 1338. WEEKLY BENEFITS

15 * * *

16 (e) An individual's weekly benefit amount shall be determined by dividing
17 the individual's two high quarter total subject wages required under
18 subdivision (d)(1) of this section by 45 and adding \$25.00 to the resulting
19 quotient, provided that the weekly benefit amount so determined shall not
20 exceed the maximum weekly benefit amount computed pursuant to subsection
21 (f) of this section.

1 (f)(1) The maximum weekly benefit amount shall be annually adjusted on
2 the first day of the first calendar week in July to an amount equal to the sum of
3 \$25.00 plus 57 percent of the State annual average weekly wage as determined
4 by subsection (g) of this section.

5 * * *

6 Sec. 7. MODIFICATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

7 MAINFRAME CODE; ANNUAL REPORT; INDEPENDENT
8 VERIFICATION

9 (a) The Commissioner of Labor shall develop and implement changes to
10 the unemployment insurance mainframe software necessary to implement on
11 July 1, 2024 the changes to the unemployment insurance weekly benefit
12 amount enacted pursuant to Sec. 6 of this act. The changes shall be developed
13 and implemented in a manner that minimizes risk to the operation of the
14 mainframe and the functions of the unemployment insurance program.

15 (b) The Commissioner of Labor shall, on or before January 15, 2023 and
16 January 15, 2024, submit a written report to the House Committee on
17 Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee on Economic
18 Development, Housing and General Affairs, and the Legislative Information
19 Technology Consultant retained by the Joint Fiscal Office detailing the actions
20 taken and progress made in carrying out the requirements of subsection (a) of
21 this section, the anticipated timeline for finishing development of the necessary

1 changes, and potential implementation risks identified during the development
2 process.

3 (c) The Legislative Information Technology Consultant shall, on or before
4 February 15, 2023 and February 15, 2024, submit to the House Committee on
5 Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on
6 Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs a review of the report
7 submitted pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. The review shall include
8 an assessment of the ability to implement the necessary changes to the
9 unemployment insurance mainframe software before July 1, 2024 and shall
10 identify any potential risks or concerns related to implementation that are not
11 addressed in the Commissioner's report.

12 * * * Effective Dates * * *

13 Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

14 (a) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214, Sec. 1 (repeal of prior supplemental
15 benefit) shall take effect retroactively on October 7, 2021.

16 (b)(1) Sec. 2 (temporary supplemental benefit) shall take effect on July 1,
17 2022 and apply to benefit weeks beginning after that date.

18 (2) Secs. 3 (special fund), 4 (appropriation for temporary supplemental
19 benefit), and 5 (sunset of supplemental benefit) shall take effect on July 1,
20 2022.

1 (c) Sec. 6 (increase in weekly benefit amount) shall take effect on July 1,
2 2024 and shall apply to benefit weeks beginning after that date.

3 (d) This section and Sec. 7 (report on implementation of change to weekly
4 benefit) shall take effect on passage.