

Assembly Bill No. 970

CHAPTER 783

An act to amend Sections 558, 1197, 1197.1, and 2802 of the Labor Code, relating to employment.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2015. Filed with
Secretary of State October 11, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 970, Nazarian. Labor Commissioner: enforcement of employee claims.

(1) Existing law authorizes the Labor Commissioner to investigate and enforce statutes and orders of the Industrial Welfare Commission that, among other things, specify the requirements for the payment of wages by employers. Existing law provides for criminal and civil penalties for violations of statutes and orders of the commission regarding payment of wages.

This bill would, in addition, authorize the Labor Commissioner to investigate and, upon a request from the local entity, to enforce local laws regarding overtime hours or minimum wage provisions and to issue citations and penalties for violations, except when the local entity has already issued a citation for the same violation. The bill would prohibit a local entity from issuing a citation to the employer if the Labor Commissioner has already issued a citation to that employer for the same violation. This bill also would make related conforming changes. By expanding the definition of a crime, this bill would create a state-mandated local program.

(2) Existing law requires an employer to indemnify his or her employees for all that the employee necessarily expends or loses in direct consequence of the discharge of the employee's duties or as a result of obeying the employer's directions. Existing law provides an aggrieved employee with a private right of action to recover these expenditures.

This bill would, additionally, authorize the Labor Commissioner to enforce these provisions by issuing citations and penalties to employers for violations of this requirement, as specified.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 558 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

558. (a) Any employer or other person acting on behalf of an employer who violates, or causes to be violated, a section of this chapter or any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows:

(1) For any initial violation, fifty dollars (\$50) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.

(2) For each subsequent violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.

(3) Wages recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee.

(b) If upon inspection or investigation the Labor Commissioner determines that a person had paid or caused to be paid a wage for overtime work in violation of any provision of this chapter, any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission, or any applicable local overtime law, the Labor Commissioner may issue a citation. The procedures for issuing, contesting, and enforcing judgments for citations or civil penalties issued by the Labor Commissioner for a violation of this chapter shall be the same as those set out in Section 1197.1.

(c) In a jurisdiction where a local entity has the legal authority to issue a citation against an employer for a violation of any applicable local overtime law, the Labor Commissioner, pursuant to a request from the local entity, may issue a citation against an employer for a violation of any applicable local overtime law if the local entity has not cited the employer for the same violation. If the Labor Commissioner issues a citation, the local entity shall not cite the employer for the same violation.

(d) The civil penalties provided for in this section are in addition to any other civil or criminal penalty provided by law.

(e) This section does not change the applicability of local overtime wage laws to any entity.

SEC. 2. Section 1197 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

1197. The minimum wage for employees fixed by the commission or by any applicable state or local law, is the minimum wage to be paid to employees, and the payment of a lower wage than the minimum so fixed is unlawful. This section does not change the applicability of local minimum wage laws to any entity.

SEC. 3. Section 1197.1 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

1197.1. (a) Any employer or other person acting either individually or as an officer, agent, or employee of another person, who pays or causes to be paid to any employee a wage less than the minimum fixed by an applicable state or local law, or by an order of the commission shall be subject to a civil penalty, restitution of wages, liquidated damages payable to the employee, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 as follows:

(1) For any initial violation that is intentionally committed, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which

the employee is underpaid. This amount shall be in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages, liquidated damages pursuant to Section 1194.2, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203.

(2) For each subsequent violation for the same specific offense, two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee is underpaid regardless of whether the initial violation is intentionally committed. This amount shall be in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages, liquidated damages pursuant to Section 1194.2, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203.

(3) Wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203, recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee.

(b) If, upon inspection or investigation, the Labor Commissioner determines that a person has paid or caused to be paid a wage less than the minimum under applicable law, the Labor Commissioner may issue a citation to the person in violation. The citation may be served personally or by registered mail in accordance with subdivision (c) of Section 11505 of the Government Code. Each citation shall be in writing and shall describe the nature of the violation, including reference to the statutory provision alleged to have been violated. The Labor Commissioner promptly shall take all appropriate action, in accordance with this section, to enforce the citation and to recover the civil penalty assessed, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 in connection with the citation.

(c) (1) If a person desires to contest a citation or the proposed assessment of a civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 therefor, the person shall, within 15 business days after service of the citation, notify the office of the Labor Commissioner that appears on the citation of his or her request for an informal hearing. The Labor Commissioner or his or her deputy or agent shall, within 30 days, hold a hearing at the conclusion of which the citation or proposed assessment of a civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 shall be affirmed, modified, or dismissed.

(2) The decision of the Labor Commissioner shall consist of a notice of findings, findings, and an order, all of which shall be served on all parties to the hearing within 15 days after the hearing by regular first-class mail at the last known address of the party on file with the Labor Commissioner. Service shall be completed pursuant to Section 1013 of the Code of Civil Procedure. Any amount found due by the Labor Commissioner as a result of a hearing shall become due and payable 45 days after notice of the findings and written findings and order have been mailed to the party assessed. A writ of mandate may be taken from this finding to the appropriate superior court. The party shall pay any judgment and costs ultimately rendered by the court against the party for the assessment. The writ shall

be taken within 45 days of service of the notice of findings, findings, and order thereon.

(d) A person to whom a citation has been issued shall, in lieu of contesting a citation pursuant to this section, transmit to the office of the Labor Commissioner designated on the citation the amount specified for the violation within 15 business days after issuance of the citation.

(e) When no petition objecting to a citation or the proposed assessment of a civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 is filed, a certified copy of the citation or proposed civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 may be filed by the Labor Commissioner in the office of the clerk of the superior court in any county in which the person assessed has or had a place of business. The clerk, immediately upon the filing, shall enter judgment for the state against the person assessed in the amount shown on the citation or proposed assessment of a civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203.

(f) When findings and the order thereon are made affirming or modifying a citation or proposed assessment of a civil penalty, wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203 after hearing, a certified copy of these findings and the order entered thereon may be entered by the Labor Commissioner in the office of the clerk of the superior court in any county in which the person assessed has property or in which the person assessed has or had a place of business. The clerk, immediately upon the filing, shall enter judgment for the state against the person assessed in the amount shown on the certified order.

(g) A judgment entered pursuant to this section shall bear the same rate of interest and shall have the same effect as other judgments and be given the same preference allowed by the law on other judgments rendered for claims for taxes. The clerk shall make no charge for the service provided by this section to be performed by him or her.

(h) In a jurisdiction where a local entity has the legal authority to issue a citation against an employer for a violation of any applicable local minimum wage law, the Labor Commissioner, pursuant to a request from the local entity, may issue a citation against an employer for a violation of any applicable local minimum wage law if the local entity has not cited the employer for the same violation. If the Labor Commissioner issues a citation, the local entity shall not cite the employer for the same violation.

(i) The civil penalties provided for in this section are in addition to any other penalty provided by law.

(j) This section shall not apply to any order of the commission relating to household occupations.

(k) This section does not change the applicability of local minimum wage laws to any entity.

SEC. 4. Section 2802 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

2802. (a) An employer shall indemnify his or her employee for all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employee in direct

consequence of the discharge of his or her duties, or of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer, even though unlawful, unless the employee, at the time of obeying the directions, believed them to be unlawful.

(b) All awards made by a court or by the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement for reimbursement of necessary expenditures under this section shall carry interest at the same rate as judgments in civil actions. Interest shall accrue from the date on which the employee incurred the necessary expenditure or loss.

(c) For purposes of this section, the term “necessary expenditures or losses” shall include all reasonable costs, including, but not limited to, attorney’s fees incurred by the employee enforcing the rights granted by this section.

(d) In addition to recovery of penalties under this section in a court action or proceedings pursuant to Section 98, the commissioner may issue a citation against an employer or other person acting on behalf of the employer who violates reimbursement obligations for an amount determined to be due to an employee under this section. The procedures for issuing, contesting, and enforcing judgments for citations or civil penalties issued by the commissioner shall be the same as those set forth in Section 1197.1. Amounts recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee.

SEC. 5. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.