

INSIGHTS + NEWS

Client Alert: Rhode Island Employers Should Take Note of Key Changes to State Employment Laws

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The State of Rhode Island recently approved changes to multiple employment laws, including the Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act and the Rhode Island Payment of Wages Act. Two key developments are detailed below.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW NOW COVERS EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE

On June 24, 2025, [Rhode Island enacted House Bill 6161](#), amending the Rhode Island Fair Employment Practices Act to include workplace protections for individuals experiencing menopause. As amended, the Fair Employment Practices Act now requires employers to provide accommodations for employees experiencing menopause and related conditions, including vasomotor symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats. Now, employers must work to identify reasonable accommodations for individuals whose menopause symptoms impact their ability to perform the essential functions of their jobs. It remains that employers must accommodate covered employees unless they can prove that the requested accommodations would pose an undue hardship on their business operations.

The amendment also includes new notice and posting obligations for employers. Employers must now display postings in the workplace that outline employees' rights to be free from discrimination related to menopause and to request reasonable accommodations. Additionally, written notices of these rights must be provided to new hires at the start of employment and to current employees by October 22, 2025. Any employee who reports experiencing menopause-related symptoms must be provided such notice within ten (10) days.

NEW NOTICE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE RHODE ISLAND PAYMENT OF WAGES ACT

Rhode Island employers also face new obligations under the state's 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. Specifically, the written notice must be in English and contain the following information:

- The rate(s) of pay and basis thereof (i.e., by the hour, shift, day, week, salary, piece, commission, or other method) and the specific application of any additional rates;
- Allowances, if any, claimed, pursuant to permitted meals and lodging;
- The employer's policies on sick, vacation, personal leave, holidays, and hours;
- The employee's employment status and whether the employee is exempt from minimum wage and/or overtime;
- A list of deductions that may be made from the employee's pay;

- The number of days in the pay period, the regularly scheduled payday, and the payday on which the employee will receive the first payment of wages earned;
- The legal name of the employer and the operating name of the employer, if different from its legal name;
- The physical address of the employer's main office or principal place of business, and its mailing address if different; and
- The telephone number of the employer.

Once distributed, this notice must be signed by the employee, and a copy must be retained by the employer. Violating employers will be fined \$400 for the first and second violation, and any subsequent violations will be considered misdemeanors punishable by additional fines and/or imprisonment of up to one (1) year.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES

The Rhode Island legislature also passed reforms to the state's minimum wage statute, leading to increases over the next two years. The current statutory minimum wage is \$15 per hour. Starting January 1, 2026, the minimum wage will be \$16 per hour, and starting January 1, 2027, the minimum wage increase again to \$17 per hour.

EMPLOYER TAKEAWAY

Rhode Island employers should immediately review their anti-discrimination and accommodation policies and practices to ensure compliance with respect to employees experiencing menopause and related conditions. Employers should also prepare for their distribution of new hire notices and the new minimum wage, both beginning January 1, 2026. For questions regarding this alert, please [contact the alert authors or your Bowditch attorney](#).