



# Workplace Costs and Benefits

2009-2010 Key Issue Overview (page 1 of 2)

The costs and benefit programs associated with the workplace are a constant challenge for Ohio employers. Employment concerns like maternity leave, mandated paid sick leave, and the Employee Free Choice Act “Card Check” as well as benefit programs like workers’ compensation and unemployment compensation can drive up costs and interfere with the relationship an employer has with its employees.

Each time our state government imposes a new benefit mandate, decreases an employer’s management flexibility or adds layers of new compliance requirements, Ohio becomes a less attractive state in which to do business.

## Chamber Agenda: *Where We Stand*

- ▶ Reduce inconsistencies and duplication between state and federal employment laws.
- ▶ Advance legislation that models the federal process for claims filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission.
- ▶ Support changes to the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation that contain costs through employer incentives to manage and defend claims. These include the long-term viability of alternative rating programs, such as group rating and discount programs for non-group rating eligible employers.



**CHAMBER ACTION ALLIANCE**

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## What to Expect: *Looking Ahead through 2009-2010*

During the past two years, Ohio employers have faced workplace cost and benefit proposals ranging from new maternity leave requirements to mandatory paid sick days. These issues, along with Card Check and the cost of workers' compensation, will continue to be front and center.

While workers' compensation is a state issue, mandated paid sick leave and Card Check may receive a lot of attention at the federal level. A stronger presence of labor-supported members of Congress and the new President could mean a bumpy ride for employers. Rest assured, the Chamber Action Alliance will continue to update you on any developments in these areas whether at the state or federal level.

### Governor Ted Strickland

During his first two years in office, Gov. Strickland often expressed his understanding of the relationship between workplace costs and job growth. In fact, just last year, he joined legislative leaders in helping to prevent the mandated paid sick leave proposal from reaching the ballot. That costly proposal would have cost Ohioans thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in lost revenue and wages.

With job creation and economic growth so important, bipartisan efforts to lower costs for Ohio employers must be a priority. However, like at the federal level, we could see more support for labor's agenda forcing costly workplace mandates to the forefront.

### The Ohio General Assembly

With fewer pro business legislators in the 128th General Assembly the potential for harmful proposals regarding Workplace Costs and Benefits is greater. Additionally, the new make-up of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review may mean there is less support for rejecting costly rules like the maternity leave rules proposed by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission last year.

But, both the House and Senate have demonstrated an interest in working with the Ohio Chamber to address issues that make Ohio employers less competitive. We are hopeful their interest will translate into better policies for our economy.

### Workers' Compensation Group Rating Coalition

One of the biggest costs of doing business for employers is workers' compensation. To help keep costs down, the Ohio Chamber is leading a workers' compensation group rating coalition. The coalition is working diligently to preserve group rating programs.

Group rating allows businesses to join large groups of employers with similar levels of risk in order to receive premium discounts. Unfortunately, the Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) has been working to lower those premium discounts and is planning even more discount reductions.

This strategy could be devastating to employers who are responsible and have a relatively claim free history. The Ohio Chamber and the coalition will continue to advocate for ways to prevent future premium discount reductions.



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