

Will workers' compensation be reformed in 2013?

The Pennsylvania governor and lawmakers are trying to change workers' compensation in the state. Lawmakers have proposed a bill that would increase the amount of time injured workers have to see employer-approved physicians for their medical treatment.

The bill was proposed to reduce fraud and save companies money when paying workers' compensation benefits to injured employees. Lawmakers and other proponents of the bill say that it will help injured workers return to work faster as well as lower the costs for employers.

The amount of time that injured workers would be required to use employer-selected physicians for medical treatment would increase from 90 to 180 days. The change would allow injured workers to continue receiving medical treatments under the same doctor instead of stopping care or changing doctors after 90 days.

Opponents of the proposed bill say that it impacts medical care for workers by limiting which doctor workers can see. They also say that it could also impact a worker's ability to receive a second opinion from another doctor and may increase the chances of being misdiagnosed. Opponents' main issue is that the bill may restrict injured workers from receiving the best medical care for their injuries.

Lawmakers said that if a 180 day deal does not work, maybe a different deal can be reached to help reduce the cost of workers' compensation and reduce the risk of fraud. Reforming workers' compensation in Pennsylvania may be taken up during the next legislative session but it may depend on what other issues are also waiting for the legislature to review.

Source: Central Penn Business Journal, "Stalled workers' compensation reform has new chance in 2013," Jim Ryan, Dec. 21, 2012