

Legislative and Regulatory Timeline

During the 20th century, Congress passed a number of laws that affected the American worker. Some laws provided a social safety net that protected workers against loss of income due to unemployment, old age, or disability. Other laws protected workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and be treated fairly by both their employers and union representatives. Separate laws banned socially unacceptable labor conditions such as child labor. Still others protected workers against adverse safety and health conditions; long hours; low pay; and discrimination based on race, sex, or national origin. In addition, some laws provided for job training and other services for the unemployed or underemployed, while other protected workers' benefits or encouraged new types of benefits.

1875	American Express Company established the first private pension plan offered by a U.S. company.
1884	Federal Labor Bureau, the predecessor of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was established by the Hopkins Act.
1891	Kansas established the first State prevailing wage law.
1903	Department of Commerce and Labor was established by an act of Congress.
1912	Massachusetts adopts first minimum wage law for women and minors.
1913	U.S. Department of Labor was established by an act of Congress. It includes the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, and the Children's Bureau.
1914	Clayton Act limited the use of injunctions in labor disputes and provided that picketing and other union activities should not be considered unlawful.
1916	First Federal child labor law. Signed, but struck down.
1920	Began conversion to 5-day workweek. Women's Bureau established.
1926	Railway Labor Act required railroad employers to bargain collectively and not discriminate against employees for joining a union.
1931	Davis-Bacon Act provided for the payment of prevailing wage rates to laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and subcontractors on public construction.
1932	Norris-LaGuardia Act declared it to be public policy that workers should have full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.
1933	Wagner-Peyser Act created U.S. Employment Service in Department of Labor.
1935	Federal Social Security Act provided a nationwide system of social insurance to protect wage earners and their families.
	National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act established the first national policy of protecting the rights of workers to organize and elect their representatives for collective bargaining purposes.
1936	Public Contracts (Walsh-Healey) Act set labor standards on Government contracts requiring the manufacture or purchase of materials.
1938	Fair Labor Standards Act set minimum wage, maximum hours, and time pay, as well as equal pay and child labor standards.
1947	Labor-Management Relations (Taft-Hartley) Act reiterated policies protecting rights of workers to organize and elect union representatives and placed some checks on union and management activities.
1949	An amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act directly prohibited child labor for the first time.
	Courts decided that benefits are subject to collective bargaining.
1958	Welfare and Pension Disclosure Act required administration of health insurance, pension, and supplementary unemployment compensation plans to file plan descriptions and annual financial reports with the Secretary of Labor.
1959	Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure (Landrum-Griffin) Act prohibited improper activities by labor and management, such as secondary boycotts; provided certain protection for the rights of union members; and required filing of certain financial reports by unions and employers.
1962	Manpower Development and Training Act required Federal Government to determine manpower requirements and resources and to "deal with the problems of unemployment resulting from automation and technological changes and other types of unemployment."

Legislative and Regulatory Timeline—Continued

1963	Equal Pay Act prohibited wage differentials based on sex for workers covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act.
1964	Title VII of the Civil Rights Act established U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce Federal statutes prohibiting employment discrimination.
1965	Medicare established under Social Security. McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act provided wage standards for employees performing work on Federal service contracts.
1968	Age Discrimination in Employment Act made it illegal to discharge, refuse to hire, or otherwise discriminate against persons ages 40 to 65.
1969	Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act protected the health and safety of the Nation's coal miners.
1970	Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) placed certain duties on employers and employees to assure safe and healthful working conditions.
1974	Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) imposed standards on employer-provided benefit plans. Act was designed to protect the security of pension promises made by private sector firms.
1978	Pregnancy Discrimination Act required employee benefit programs to treat pregnancy in the same way as illnesses. Revenue Act of 1978 permitted employers to create 401(k) plans.
1982	Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) prepared youths and adults facing serious barriers to employment by providing job training and other services that would result in increased earnings, increased education and occupational skills, and decreased welfare dependency.
1985	Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) required employers that provide health care benefits to continue such benefits to formerly-covered individuals for a period of time after employer coverage ends.
1986	Strengthening of Age Discrimination in Employment Act. Tax Reform Act included provisions designed to simplify employer pension plan administration.
1989	Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) provided protection to workers, their families and communities, by requiring employers to provide notification 60 calendar days in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs.
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) established a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability.
1993	Family and Medical Leave Act mandated employers to provide unpaid time off for worker and family medical purposes.
1998	Workforce Investment Act (WIA) superseded JTPA, reformed Federal job training programs, and created a new, customer-focused, comprehensive workforce investment system.
1999	Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act modernized employment-related services offered to Americans with disabilities and expanded health care coverage so that individuals with disabilities would be able to go to work without fear of losing their health insurance.