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## **Tennessee workers' comp reforms aimed at system efficiency, predictability**

On April 29, 2013, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam signed into law [Senate Bill 200](#), known as the Tennessee Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 2013. A major legislative priority for Governor Haslam, the bill is expected to make the workers' compensation system more efficient and predictable, thereby improving Tennessee's business climate.

Certain amendments in the bill, including those providing for the adoption of rules and the appointment of personnel to manage the new administrative system, are effective immediately.

- By July 1, 2013, or as soon thereafter as is practical, the governor is required to appoint an administrator of the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC), now an independent unit. It is anticipated that the current administrator of the DWC, Abbie Hudgens, will be appointed.
- One of the most significant provisions of Senate Bill 200 is the replacement of its court-based workers' compensation dispute-resolution system with an administrative process. This involves the creation of a new Court of Workers' Compensation Claims to handle disputes involving job-related injuries or illnesses occurring on or after July 1, 2014. The administrator is responsible for the appointment of a court clerk, at least 16 attorneys qualified to serve as workers' compensation judges, and a chief judge on or after July 1, 2013.

The remaining provisions of the bill become effective on or after July 1, 2014. Among them are a rewrite of the definition of causation with regard to injuries, the creation of an ombudsman's office to assist employees without attorneys, and an increase in the maximum benefit duration from 400 to 450 weeks. [Click here](#) for a summary of key provisions of the Tennessee Workers' Compensation Act of 2013.

Since the new law is not effective until July 1, 2014, the Tennessee state legislature will have another session during which to propose further changes if they so choose. Sedgwick's subject matter experts will be closely monitoring for any further activity related to this legislation and will keep you apprised of the situation as it unfolds.

If you have questions about Tennessee Senate Bill 200, please contact your Sedgwick client services representative.

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