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Governor Paterson Signs on for a 13-Week Extension to Unemployment Benefits

On June 30, 2008, President Bush signed legislation that extended eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. Within days NY Governor David Paterson signed an agreement allowing New York State to participate in the federally-funded 13-week extension of those benefits.

The NY State Department of Labor began mailing letters with instructions for applying for extended benefits to all eligible claimants on Monday, July 14, 2008.

The Federal Minimum Wage Went Up – Did You Notice?

Few New York employers noticed that, effective yesterday, July 24, 2008 the Federal minimum hourly wage increased from \$5.85 to \$6.55 per hour. That's because even with a seventy-cent increase, the Federal minimum wage rate is still below the NY State minimum hourly wage of \$7.15—for now.

That will not be the case next year when the Federal rate automatically increases again on July 24, 2009 to \$7.25, 10 cents above the NYS minimum hourly wage.

Employers with outdated employment law posters must update the Federal minimum wage posting. Please [contact CANIAHR](#) if you have questions regarding what postings are required, or if you'd like to order new [Federal/State all-in-one posters](#) for your workplace.

The IRS Increased the standard mileage rate—will you?

Due to the rapidly rising cost of fuel, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has adjusted the optional standard mileage rate to 58.5 cents per mile for business miles driven from July 1 to December 31, 2008. This is

an increase of 8 cents per mile over the rate of 50.5 cents per mile in effect from January 1 to June 30, 2008.

Feel free to [contact CANIAHR](#) with any questions regarding the revised IRS mileage rates or your company policy regarding employee reimbursement of business mileage.

New Notification Requirements: Blood Donation Leave & Expressing of Breast Milk

Blood Donation Leave—Notice Requirements

As of July 8, 2008, the new state blood donation guidelines require covered New York employers to notify all employees in writing about their right to take leave to donate blood.

New York 's blood donation leave law covers all public and private New York employers with 20 or more employees and requires employers to provide no fewer than three hours of unpaid leave time within any twelve-month period to donate blood.

Right of Nursing Mothers to Express Breast Milk—Notice Requirements

Recently issued 2008 guidelines require employers to provide employees with written notification of New York 's law providing rights to employees to express breast milk following the birth of a child.

All New York employers, regardless of size, must provide breastfeeding employees with reasonable unpaid break time or paid break or meal time to express breast milk for their nursing child, for up to three years after the birth of the child.

Employers must make reasonable efforts to provide a private area or room, other than a restroom, for breastfeeding employees to express milk – unless it is significantly impracticable, inconvenient, or expensive for the employer to do so. Further, the area or room provided for the expression of breast milk must be near the employee's work area.

Employers may provide notice of employee rights under these laws by, among other things, including the notices in the employee handbook. Feel free to [contact CANIAHR](#) with any questions regarding the new notification requirements for blood donation and expressing of breast milk.