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U.S. Employment & Labor Law Updates - July 2026

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HR O'CLOCK COMPLIANCE BRIEF

Employment laws continue to evolve throughout the year. This July 2026 briefing highlights notable state and local changes involving minimum wage, leave, pay transparency, hiring, restrictive covenants, wage practices, recordkeeping and other workplace requirements.

July 1 Effective-Date Updates

Alaska	July 1	State minimum wage increases to \$14.00/hour.
Arkansas	July 1	New Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act creates privacy/security obligations for covered online businesses dealing with minors' data. This is broader business/privacy legislation but can affect employers operating covered platforms.
California	July 1	Healthcare minimum-wage schedule advances; certain large healthcare systems and dialysis facilities reach \$25/hour. Numerous local minimum wages also increase, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Pasadena, Santa Monica and others.
California	July 1	Private/religious K–12 schools become subject to expanded child-abuse-prevention and safe-environment procedures.
Colorado	July 1	Maximum wage claim that the Colorado Division of Labor Standards and Statistics can adjudicate increases from \$7,500 to \$13,000.
Connecticut	July 1	New warehouse-worker protections regulate productivity quotas, require disclosures/records and prohibit retaliation. Generally applies to employers with 250+ employees at a single Connecticut warehouse distribution center.

Connecticut	July 1	Amendments broaden the Connecticut Data Privacy Act, including its reach and treatment of sensitive data.
District of Columbia	July 1	Minimum wage increases to \$18.40/hour; tipped minimum wage rises to \$10.30/hour, subject to the employer making up any shortfall to the full minimum wage.
Florida	July 1	Florida Civil Rights Act procedures/statutes of limitation change. Employment discrimination lawsuits generally must satisfy new filing deadlines tied to FCHR/EEOC determinations or the administrative complaint date.
Florida	July 1	Hospitality businesses face expanded disclosure requirements concerning mandatory service charges, automatic gratuities and other fees, which can also affect wage-and-hour practices.
Georgia	July 1	New Voluntary Portable Benefits Act permits benefit contributions for independent contractors/gig workers without automatically affecting independent-contractor classification.
Georgia	July 1	Employers using federal Section 14(c) certificates must pay workers with disabilities at least 50% of the federal minimum wage during the transition toward elimination of subminimum wages.
Hawaii	July 1	Hawaii Family Leave expands to include certain qualifying military exigencies involving specified family members on active duty.
Illinois – Chicago	July 1	Chicago minimum wage rises to \$17.05/hour for covered employers with four or more employees; tipped rate becomes \$12.96/hour.
Illinois – Cook County	July 1	Cook County minimum wage increases to \$15.40/hour for non-tipped employees and \$9.25/hour for tipped employees, subject to coverage/local rules.
Illinois – Chicago	July 1	A temporary procedural/cure limitation on employee private actions under Chicago's paid-leave ordinance sunsets, increasing employers' potential exposure to private claims.
Indiana	July 1	New immigration/employment enforcement provisions authorize state enforcement against employers that knowingly or intentionally recruit, hire or continue employing unauthorized workers, with safe-harbor provisions including proper E-Verify use.
Indiana	July 1	State employer-registration requirements for businesses employing multiple minors are eliminated.
Maine	July 1	Maximum weekly Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit becomes \$1,249.12. Maine PFML benefits began May 1, but the benefit cap changes July 1.
Maryland – Howard County	July 1	Minimum wage for employers with fewer than 15 employees increases to \$16.00/hour.
Maryland – Montgomery County	July 1	Minimum wages increase to \$18.00 for employers with 51+ employees, \$16.50 for 11–50 employees, and \$15.95 for employers with 10 or fewer employees.
Minnesota – St. Paul	July 1	Minimum wage increases for covered small and micro businesses.
New Hampshire	July 1	Civil penalties become available for violations of state workplace lactation-accommodation requirements. Covered employers must provide qualifying pumping breaks and an appropriate private space.
Oklahoma	July 1	Public school districts must provide three days of paid bereavement leave to teachers/support personnel following the death of a spouse or child, including qualifying miscarriage-related circumstances.
Oregon	July 1	Minimum wage increases to \$15.55 standard, \$16.80 Portland Metro, and \$14.55 nonurban counties.
South Dakota	July 1	New rules clarify enforceability of certain noncompetes involving owners leaving jointly owned businesses.
South Dakota	July 1	Certain restrictive covenants involving community-service providers are prohibited.

Tennessee	July 1	Major new restrictive-covenant framework governs noncompetes, nonsolicitation and related agreements entered into, renewed or amended from July 1 forward. Among the major changes is protection for workers below specified compensation thresholds.
Tennessee	July 1	State/local government employers face new E-Verify requirements for prospective employees.
Virginia	July 1	Major pay transparency law requires wage/salary ranges in external job postings and internal promotion/transfer opportunities and prohibits salary-history inquiries. Violations can expose employers to statutory damages and attorneys' fees.
Virginia	July 1	Virginia expands paid sick leave broadly to public/private employees, generally accruing at 1 hour per 30 hours worked, subject to a 40-hour annual accrual/use cap.
Virginia	July 1	Virginia Human Rights Act coverage expands generally to employers with 5+ employees, rather than the prior 15-employee threshold for much of the statute; discrimination filing periods also expand.
Virginia	July 1	Additional noncompete restrictions apply, including protections for employees discharged without appropriate severance/compensation and a broader prohibition covering certain healthcare professionals.
Virginia	July 1	Wage-payment law changes broaden wage definitions and require employers to retain employee pay statements for at least 3 years.
Virginia	July 1	New protections prohibit retaliation/discharge against qualifying employees absent because they are serving as volunteer emergency responders.
Virginia	July 1	Virginia's state-facilitated IRA program expands eligibility by reducing the employer-size threshold from 25 to 5 employees.
Washington	July 1	Washington's Fair Chance/background-check law becomes significantly more restrictive for employers with 15+ employees, including additional pre-adverse-action procedures and limits on criminal-history inquiries. Smaller employers become subject January 1, 2027.
Washington	July 1	Child-labor protections are strengthened, including increased penalties and possible loss of an employer's minor-work permit; other changes expand work opportunities for certain 16- and 17-year-olds enrolled in qualifying programs.

Other Important July Dates

These developments should not be labeled “effective July 1,” but they belong in a complete July 2026 employment-law update.

New Hampshire — July 7

Employers get 20 days instead of 10 to object after receiving notice of certain wage claims.

New York — July 15

Employers with 10–14 employees that are covered by the New York Secure Choice Savings Program reach their registration/exemption-certification deadline. This generally concerns employers that do not already offer a qualified retirement plan.

Nebraska — July 17/18

Nebraska rolls out a state “mini-WARN” regime for certain large employers, requiring 90 days’ advance notice for covered mass layoffs/business closings, along with protections involving non-English-speaking employees. Nebraska also implements youth-wage changes in mid-July. Sources differ by one day in describing the effective date, so the statutory effective-date calculation should be verified before publishing the exact date.

New Jersey — July 17

The New Jersey Family Leave Act expands dramatically. Employer coverage drops from 30 employees to 15 employees, more workers become eligible for job-protected family leave, and related leave protections expand.

Maine — July 29

Maine's new pay transparency law requires covered job postings to state the prospective pay range. Maine also implements substantial new workplace electronic-monitoring/surveillance requirements and major changes to employer drug-testing rules.

Major Item to Flag: Virginia

Virginia stands out as one of the most significant jurisdictions for July 2026. Employers are addressing pay transparency, salary-history restrictions, expanded civil-rights coverage, paid sick leave, noncompete restrictions, wage-and-hour changes, emergency-responder protections and the groundwork for statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance. The PFML law technically takes effect July 1, but payroll contributions do not begin until April 1, 2028, and benefits are not scheduled to begin until December 1, 2028.

What About the Other States?

Not all 50 states implemented new generally applicable employment laws on July 1. The July 2026 changes are concentrated in the jurisdictions identified in this briefing, and local ordinances may create additional obligations even where there is no statewide change.

Minimum Wage Context

The National Conference of State Legislatures' minimum-wage database was updated July 1, 2026 and reports that 34 states, territories and districts have minimum wages above the federal \$7.25 rate.

Sources & Further Reading

- Fisher Phillips — July 2026 Employer Cheat Sheet
- Ogletree Deakins — July 1, 2026 Employment Laws
- Seyfarth — July 2026 Employment Law Horizon Report
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) — State Minimum Wages

Need help interpreting or implementing these changes?

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