

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2017

H

2

HOUSE BILL 5\*  
Committee Substitute Favorable 2/23/17

Short Title: Unemployment Insurance Technical Changes.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

January 26, 2017

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO MAKE TECHNICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND CLARIFYING CHANGES TO  
3 THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE LAWS.  
4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5  
6 **PART I. DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

7 **SECTION 1.(a)** G.S. 96-1(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

8 **"§ 96-1. Title and definitions.**

9 ...

10 (b) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this Chapter:

11 ...  
12 (14a) Federal disaster declaration. – Declaration of a major natural disaster by the  
13 President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency  
14 Assistance Act, provided that the declaration allows disaster unemployment  
15 assistance under the federal act.

16 ...."

17 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 96-11.3(b)(2) reads as rewritten:

18 **"§ 96-11.3. Noncharging of benefits.**

19 ...

20 (b) To Any Base Period Employer. – Benefits paid to an individual may not be charged to  
21 the account of an employer of the individual if the benefits paid meet any of the following  
22 descriptions:

23 ...  
24 (2) They were paid to an individual for unemployment due directly to a ~~major~~  
25 ~~natural disaster declared by the President pursuant to the Disaster Relief Act of~~  
26 ~~1970, and the individual receiving the benefits would have been eligible for~~  
27 ~~disaster unemployment assistance under this federal act if the individual had not~~  
28 ~~received benefits under this Chapter covered by a federal disaster declaration."~~

29 **SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 96-14.1(b) reads as rewritten:

30 **"§ 96-14.1. Unemployment benefits.**

31 ...

32 (b) Valid Claim. – To obtain benefits, an individual must file a valid claim for  
33 unemployment benefits, register for work, and have a weekly benefit amount calculated pursuant  
34 to G.S. 96-14.2(a) that equals or exceeds fifteen dollars (\$15.00). An individual must serve a  
35 one-week waiting period for each claim ~~filed.~~ filed, except no waiting period applies under this  
36 subsection to a claim for unemployment due directly to a disaster covered by a federal disaster



1 declaration. A valid claim is one that meets the employment and wage standards in this subsection  
2 for the individual's base period. A valid claim for a second benefit year is one that meets the  
3 employment and wage standards in this subsection since the beginning date of the prior benefit  
4 year and before the date the new benefit claim is filed:

5 ...."

6 **SECTION 1.(d)** G.S. 96-14.9 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7 **"§ 96-14.9. Weekly certification.**

8 (a) Requirements. – An individual's eligibility for a weekly benefit amount is determined  
9 on a week-to-week basis. An individual must meet all of the requirements of this section for each  
10 weekly benefit period. An individual who fails to meet one or more of the requirements is  
11 ineligible to receive benefits until the condition causing the ineligibility ceases to exist:

12 (1) File a claim for benefits.

13 (2) Report as requested by the Division and present valid photo identification  
14 meeting the requirements of subsection (k) of this section.

15 (3) Meet the work search requirements of subsection (b) of this section.

16 (b) Work Search Requirements. – The Division must find that the individual meets all of  
17 the following work search requirements:

18 (1) The individual is able to work.

19 (2) The individual is available to work.

20 (3) The individual is actively seeking work.

21 (4) The individual accepts suitable work when offered.

22 ...

23 (l) Federal Disaster Declaration. – An individual who is unemployed due directly to a  
24 disaster covered by a federal disaster declaration has satisfied the work search requirements for  
25 any given week in the benefit period unless the Division requires the individual to conduct a work  
26 search."

27 **SECTION 1.(e)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2016.

28  
29 **PART II. PAID TIME OFF EXCLUDED FROM SEVERANCE PAY**

30 **SECTION 2.(a)** G.S. 96-15.01(c) reads as rewritten:

31 "(c) Separation Payments. – An individual is not unemployed if, with respect to the entire  
32 calendar week, the individual receives or will receive as a result of the individual's separation from  
33 work remuneration ~~in one or more of the forms listed in this subsection.~~ in any form. Amounts  
34 paid to an individual for paid time off that was available, but unused, before the individual's  
35 separation under a written policy in effect before the individual's separation are not remuneration  
36 as a result of separation. If the remuneration is given in a lump sum, the amount must be allocated  
37 on a weekly basis as if it had been earned by the individual during a week of employment. An  
38 individual may be unemployed, as provided in subsection (b) of this section, if the individual is  
39 receiving payment applicable to less than the entire ~~week.~~ week.

40 (1) ~~Wages in lieu of notice.~~

41 (2) ~~Accrued vacation pay.~~

42 (3) ~~Terminal leave pay.~~

43 (4) ~~Severance pay.~~

44 (5) ~~Separation pay.~~

45 (6) ~~Dismissal payments or wages by whatever name."~~

46 **SECTION 2.(b)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2017, and applies to claims for  
47 benefits filed on or after that date.

48  
49 **PART III. MISCELLANEOUS CHANGES**

50 **SECTION 3.1.(a)** G.S. 96-9.7 reads as rewritten:

51 **"§ 96-9.7. Surtax for the Unemployment Insurance Reserve Fund.**

1 (a) Surtax Imposed. – A surtax is imposed on an employer who is required to make a  
2 contribution to the Unemployment Insurance Fund equal to twenty percent (20%) of the  
3 contribution due under G.S. 96-9.2. Except as provided in this section, the surtax is collected and  
4 administered in the same manner as contributions. Surtaxes collected under this section must be  
5 credited to the Unemployment Insurance Reserve Fund established under G.S. 96-6.2. Interest and  
6 penalties collected on unpaid surtaxes imposed by this section must be credited to the  
7 Supplemental Employment Security Administration Fund. Penalties collected on unpaid surtaxes  
8 imposed by this section must be transferred to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund established in  
9 G.S. 115C-457.1.

10 (b) Suspension of Tax. – The tax does not apply in a calendar year if, as of ~~the preceding~~  
11 ~~August 1 computation date, September 1 of the preceding calendar year,~~ the amount in the State's  
12 account in the Unemployment Trust Fund equals or exceeds one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000)."

13 **SECTION 3.1.(b)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2017, applies to claims for  
14 benefits filed on or after that date, and applies to tax calculations on or after that date.

15 **SECTION 3.2.(a)** G.S. 96-15(b)(2) reads as rewritten:

16 "(2) Adjudication. – When a protest is made by the claimant to the initial or  
17 monetary determination, or a question or issue is raised or presented as to the  
18 eligibility of a claimant, or whether any disqualification should be imposed, or  
19 benefits denied or adjusted pursuant to G.S. 96-18, the matter shall be referred  
20 to an adjudicator. The adjudicator may consider any matter, document or  
21 statement deemed to be pertinent to the issues, including telephone  
22 conversations, and after such consideration shall render a conclusion as to the  
23 claimant's benefit entitlements. The adjudicator shall notify the claimant and all  
24 other interested parties of the conclusion reached. The conclusion of the  
25 adjudicator shall be deemed the final decision of the Division unless within 30  
26 days after the date of notification or mailing of the conclusion, whichever is  
27 earlier, a written appeal is filed pursuant to rules adopted by the Division. The  
28 Division shall be deemed an interested party for such purposes and may remove  
29 to itself or transfer to an appeals referee the proceedings involving any claim  
30 pending before an adjudicator.

31 Provided, any interested employer shall be allowed ~~14 days~~ 10 days from  
32 the mailing or delivery of the notice of the filing of a claim against the  
33 employer's account, whichever first occurs, to file with the Division its protest  
34 of the claim in order to have the claim referred to an adjudicator for a decision  
35 on the question or issue raised. Any protest filed must contain a basis for the  
36 protest and supporting statement of facts, and the protest may not be amended  
37 after the ~~14-day~~ 10-day period from the mailing or delivery of the notice of  
38 filing of a claim has expired. No payment of benefits shall be made by the  
39 Division to a claimant until one of the following occurs:

- 40 a. The employer has filed a timely protest to the claim.  
41 b. The ~~14-day~~ 10-day period for the filing of a protest by the employer has  
42 expired.  
43 c. A determination under this subdivision has been made.

44 Provided further, no question or issue may be raised or presented by the  
45 Division as to the eligibility of a claimant, or whether any disqualification  
46 should be imposed, after 45 days from the first day of the first week after the  
47 question or issue occurs with respect to which week an individual filed a claim  
48 for benefits. None of the provisions of this subsection shall have the force and  
49 effect nor shall the same be construed or interested as repealing any other  
50 provisions of G.S. 96-18.

1 An employer shall receive written notice of the employer's appeal rights and  
2 any forms that are required to allow the employer to protest the claim. The  
3 forms shall include a section referencing the appropriate rules pertaining to  
4 appeals and the instructions on how to appeal."

5 **SECTION 3.2.(b)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2017, applies to claims  
6 for benefits filed on or after that date, and applies to tax calculations on or after that date.

7 **SECTION 3.3.(a)** G.S. 96-9.6 reads as rewritten:

8 "**§ 96-9.6. Election to reimburse Unemployment Insurance Fund in lieu of contributions.**

9 (a) Applicability. – This section applies to a governmental entity, a nonprofit organization,  
10 and an Indian tribe that is required by section 3309 of the Code to have a reimbursement option.  
11 Each of these employers must finance benefits under the contributions method imposed under  
12 G.S. 96-9.2 unless the employer elects to finance benefits by making reimbursable payments to the  
13 Division for the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

14 (b) Election. – An employer may make an election under this section by filing a written  
15 notice of its election with the Division at least 30 days before the January 1 effective date of the  
16 election. An Indian tribe may make separate elections for itself and each subdivision, subsidiary,  
17 or business enterprise wholly owned by the tribe. A new employer may make an election under  
18 this section by filing a written notice of its election within 30 days after the employer receives  
19 notification from the Division that it is eligible to make an election under this section.

20 An election is valid for a minimum of four years and is binding until the employer files a  
21 notice terminating its election. An employer must file a written notice of termination with the  
22 Division at least 30 days before the January 1 effective date of the termination. The Division must  
23 notify an employer of a determination of the effective date of an election the employer makes and  
24 of any termination of the election. These determinations are subject to reconsideration, appeal, and  
25 review. An employer that makes the election allowed by this section may not deduct any amount  
26 due under this section from the remuneration of the individuals it employs.

27 (c) Reimbursable Amount. – An employer must reimburse the Unemployment Insurance  
28 Fund for the amount of benefits that are paid to an individual for weeks of unemployment that  
29 begin within a benefit year established during the effective period of the employer's election and  
30 are attributable to service that is covered by section 3309 of the Code and was performed in the  
31 employ of the employer. For regular benefits, the reimbursable amount is the amount of regular  
32 benefits paid. For extended benefits, the reimbursable amount is the amount not reimbursed by the  
33 federal government.

34 (d) Account. – The Division must establish a separate account for each reimbursing  
35 employer. The Division must credit payments made by the employer to the account. The Division  
36 must charge to the account benefits that are paid by the Unemployment Insurance Fund to  
37 individuals for weeks of unemployment that begin within a benefit year established during the  
38 effective period of the election and are attributable to service in the employ of the employer. All  
39 benefits paid must be charged to the employer's account except benefits paid through error.

40 The Division must furnish an employer with a statement of all credits and charges made to its  
41 account as of the computation date prior to January 1 of the succeeding year. The Division may, in  
42 its sole discretion, provide a reimbursing employer with informational bills or lists of charges on a  
43 basis more frequent than yearly if the Division finds it is in the best interest of the Division and the  
44 affected employer to do so.

45 (e) Annual Reconciliation. – A reimbursing employer must maintain an account balance  
46 equal to one percent (1%) of its taxable wages. The Division must determine the balance of each  
47 employer's account on the computation date. If there is a deficit in the account, the Division must  
48 bill the employer for the amount necessary to bring its account to one percent (1%) of its taxable  
49 wages for the immediate four quarters preceding July 1. Any-Except as provided in subsection (j)  
50 of this section, any amount in the account in excess of the one percent (1%) of taxable wages will  
51 be retained in the employer's account as a credit and will not be refunded to the employer. The

1 Division must send a bill as soon as practical. Payment is due within 30 days from the date a bill is  
2 mailed. Amounts unpaid by the due date accrue interest and penalties in the same manner as  
3 past-due contributions and are subject to the same collection remedies provided under G.S. 96-10  
4 for past-due contributions.

5 (f) Quarterly Wage Reports. – A reimbursing employer must submit quarterly wage  
6 reports to the Division on or before the last day of the month following the close of the calendar  
7 quarter in which the wages are paid. During the first four quarters following an election to be a  
8 reimbursing employer, the employer must submit an advance payment with its quarterly report.  
9 The amount of the advance payment is equal to one percent (1%) of the taxable wages reported on  
10 the quarterly wage report. The Division must remit the payments to the Unemployment Insurance  
11 Fund and credit the payments to the employer's account.

12 (g) Change in Election. – The Division must close the account of an employer that has  
13 been paying contributions under G.S. 96-9.2 and that elects to change to a reimbursement basis  
14 under this section. A closed account may not be used in any future computation of a contribution  
15 rate. The Division must close the account of an employer that terminates its election to reimburse  
16 the Unemployment Insurance Fund in lieu of making contributions. An employer that terminates  
17 its election under this section is subject to the standard beginning rate.

18 (h) Noncompliance by Indian Tribes. – An Indian tribe that makes an election under this  
19 section and then fails to comply with this section is subject to the following consequences:

20 (1) An employer that fails to pay an amount due within 90 days after receiving a  
21 bill and has not paid this liability as of the computation date loses the option to  
22 make reimbursable payments in lieu of contributions for the following calendar  
23 year. An employer that loses the option to make reimbursable payments in lieu  
24 of contributions for a calendar year regains that option for the following  
25 calendar year if it pays its outstanding liability and makes all contributions  
26 during the year for which the option was lost.

27 (2) Services performed for an employer that fails to make payments, including  
28 interest and penalties, required under this section after all collection activities  
29 considered necessary by the Division have been exhausted, are no longer  
30 treated as "employment" for the purpose of coverage under this Chapter. An  
31 employer that has lost coverage regains coverage under this Chapter for  
32 services performed if the Division determines that all contributions, payments  
33 in lieu of contributions, penalties, and interest have been paid. The Division  
34 must notify the Internal Revenue Service and the United States Department of  
35 Labor of any termination or reinstatement of coverage pursuant to this  
36 subsection.

37 (i) Expired January 1, 2016.

38 (j) Refund. – If a reimbursing employer erroneously remits an amount in excess of the  
39 amount due, the employer may apply to the Division for a refund of the excess amount remitted  
40 within the time limits in this subsection. The Division must determine that the requested refund  
41 was in excess of the amount due and was erroneously paid. The Division must refund, without  
42 interest, the excess amount but in no event will the refund result in an account balance less than  
43 one percent (1%) of the reimbursing employer's taxable wages. The refund application must be  
44 filed by the later of the following:

45 (1) Five years from the last day of the calendar year with respect to which a  
46 payment was made.

47 (2) One year from the date on which such payment was made."

#### 48 PART IV. FEDERAL CONFORMING CHANGES

49 SECTION 4.(a) G.S. 96-11.7 reads as rewritten:

50 "~~§ 96-11.7. Acquisition of employer and transfer~~ Transfer of account to another employer.

1 (a) ~~Mandatory Transfer.—Acquisition of a Business. —~~ When an employer acquires all of  
2 the ~~organization, trade, or business~~ of another employer, the account of the predecessor must be  
3 transferred as of the date of the acquisition to the successor ~~employer~~ for use in the determination  
4 of the successor's contribution rate. This ~~mandatory transfer subsection~~ does not apply when there  
5 is no common ownership between the predecessor and the successor and the successor acquired  
6 the assets of the predecessor in a sale in bankruptcy. ~~In this circumstance, the successor's~~  
7 ~~contribution rate is determined without regard to the predecessor's contribution rate.~~

8 (b) ~~Consent.—Acquisition of Portion of a Business. —~~ When a distinct and severable  
9 portion of an employer's ~~organization, trade, or business~~ is transferred to a successor employer and  
10 the successor employer continues to operate the acquired ~~organization, trade, or business~~, the  
11 portion of the account of the ~~transferring employer that related~~ attributable to the transferred  
12 business may, with the approval of the Division, be transferred by mutual consent ~~from the~~  
13 ~~transferring employer to the successor employer.~~ employer as of the date of the transfer. A  
14 successor employer that is a related entity of the transferring employer is eligible for a transfer  
15 from the transferring employer's account only to the extent permitted by rules adopted by the  
16 Division. No transfer may be made to the account of an employer that has ceased to be an  
17 employer under G.S. 96-11.9.

18 If a transfer of part or all of an account is allowed ~~but is not mandatory,~~ under this subsection,  
19 the successor employer requesting the transfer may make a request for transfer by filing an  
20 application for transfer with the Division within two years after the date the business was  
21 transferred ~~or the date of notification by the Division of the right to request an account transfer,~~  
22 ~~whichever is later. If the application is approved and the application was filed within 60 days after~~  
23 ~~notification from the Division of the right to request a transfer, the transfer is effective as of the~~  
24 ~~date the business was transferred. If the application is approved and the application was filed later~~  
25 ~~than 60 days after notification from the Division, the effective date of the transfer is the first day~~  
26 ~~of the calendar quarter in which the application was filed.~~ transferred.

27 If the effective date of a transfer of an account under this subsection is after the computation  
28 date in a calendar year, the Division must recalculate the contribution rate for the transferring  
29 employer and the successor employer based on their account balances on the effective date of the  
30 account transfer. ~~The recalculated contribution rate applies for the calendar year beginning after~~  
31 ~~the computation date.~~

32 (c) ~~Continuity of Control.—~~ Any new employer that has continuity of control with an  
33 existing business enterprise shall continue to be the same employer as the existing business  
34 enterprise for the purposes of this Chapter as before the existence of the new employer. The  
35 Division shall assign any new employer with continuity of control to the account of the existing  
36 business enterprise. Any new employer with continuity of control shall not request or maintain an  
37 account with the Division other than the account of the existing business enterprise. If a new  
38 employer receives a new account and the Division subsequently finds that such new employer has  
39 continuity of control with an existing business enterprise, the Division shall recalculate the annual  
40 tax rates based on the combined annual account balances of the new employer and the existing  
41 business enterprise. Acquisition by Related Party. — If an employer transfers its business, or a  
42 portion thereof, to another person and, at the time of the transfer, there is substantially common  
43 ownership, management, or control of the predecessor employer and the transferee, then the  
44 portion of the account attributable to the transferred business must be transferred to the transferee  
45 as of the date of the transfer for use in the determination of the transferee's contribution rate.

46 ~~Continuity of control—~~ Substantially common ownership, management, or control exists if one  
47 or more persons, entities, or other organizations owning, managing, or controlling the business  
48 enterprise remain in— maintain substantial ownership, management, or control of the new employer.  
49 transferee. Control may occur by means of ownership of the organization conducting the ~~business~~  
50 ~~enterprise,~~ business, ownership of assets necessary to conduct the ~~business enterprise,~~ business,  
51 security arrangements or lease arrangements covering assets necessary to conduct the ~~business~~

1 ~~enterprise, business, or a contract when the ownership, stated arrangements, or contract provide~~  
2 ~~for or allow direction of the internal affairs or conduct of the business enterprise. business. Control~~  
3 ~~is not affected by changes in the form of a business enterprise, business, reorganization of a~~  
4 ~~business enterprise, business, or expansion of a business enterprise. business.~~

5 (c1) Acquisition to Obtain Lower Contribution Rate. – The account of the predecessor  
6 employer will not be transferred if the Division finds that a person formed or acquired the business  
7 solely or primarily for the purpose of obtaining a lower contribution rate.

8 ~~(d) Contribution Rate. – Notwithstanding the other provisions in this section, when an~~  
9 ~~account is transferred in its entirety to a successor employer, the transferring employer's~~  
10 ~~contribution rate is the standard beginning rate. If the effective date of a transfer of an account~~  
11 ~~under this section is after the computation date in a calendar year, the Division must recalculate~~  
12 ~~the contribution rate for the predecessor employer and the successor employer based on their~~  
13 ~~account balances on the effective date of the account transfer.~~

14 ~~Notwithstanding the other provisions in this section, if a successor employer to whom an~~  
15 ~~account is transferred was an employer as of the date of the business transfer, the account transfer~~  
16 ~~does not affect the successor employer's contribution rate for the calendar year in which the~~  
17 ~~business was transferred. If the successor employer was not an employer as of the date of the~~  
18 ~~business transfer, the successor employer's contribution rate for the year in which the business~~  
19 ~~transfer occurs is the standard beginning rate unless one of the following applies:~~

20 (1) ~~The account transfer is a mandatory transfer, in which case the contribution rate~~  
21 ~~of the successor employer is the contribution rate of the transferring employer.~~

22 (2) ~~The account transfer is by consent and the successor employer filed an~~  
23 ~~application within 60 days of the business transfer, in which case the~~  
24 ~~contribution rate of the successor employer is the contribution rate of the~~  
25 ~~transferring employer. If the business was transferred from more than one~~  
26 ~~employer and the transferring employers had different contribution rates, the~~  
27 ~~contribution rate of the successor employer is the rate calculated as of the~~  
28 ~~effective date of the account transfers.~~

29 (e) Liability for Contributions. – An employer that, by operation of law, purchase, or  
30 otherwise is the successor to an employer liable for contributions becomes liable for contributions  
31 on the day of the succession. This provision subsection does not affect the successor's liability as  
32 otherwise prescribed by law for unpaid contributions due from the predecessor.

33 (f) Deceased or Insolvent Employer. – When the organization, trade, or business of a  
34 deceased person or of an insolvent debtor is taken over and operated by an administrator, executor,  
35 receiver, or trustee in bankruptcy, the new employer automatically succeeds to the account and  
36 contribution rate of the deceased person or insolvent debtor without the necessity of filing an  
37 application for the transfer of the account.

38 (g) Continuation of Existing Account. – Any transferee subject to a complete transfer of  
39 account under this section must not request or maintain an account with the Division other than  
40 the account of the existing business. If a transferee receives a new account and the Division  
41 subsequently finds that the transferee is subject to a complete transfer of account under this  
42 section, the Division must recalculate the annual tax rates based on the combined annual account  
43 balances of the new employer and the existing business."

44 **SECTION 4.(b)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2017.

## 45 **PART V. EFFECTIVE DATE**

46 **SECTION 5.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.  
47