

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

**FILE NUMBER:** H.F. 643

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**Version:** As Introduced

**Authors:** Hansen and Others

**Subject:** Rights of Workers in Meatpacking Industry

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### Overview

H.F. 643 sets forth a bill of rights for workers in the meatpacking industry and establishes a meatpacking industry workers rights ombudsman in the Department of Labor and Industry.

### Section

#### **1 Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights.**

**Subd. 1. Definition .** Specifies that "employer" means an employer in the meatpacking industry.

**Subd. 2. Right to adequate facilities.** Requires an employer to provide adequate and working restroom facilities; adequate room for meal and rest breaks; adequate locker facilities; and adequate time for necessary restroom breaks.

**Subd. 3. Right to adequate equipment.** Requires an employer to furnish adequate equipment for performance of tasks assigned to employees.

**Subd. 4. Information provided to employee.** Outlines the minimum information about employee rights and duties that employers must provide to employees in an employee's native language or through written materials to include:

- a complete description of the salary and benefit plans;
- a job description;
- a description of leave policies;
- a description of work hours and work hour policies;
- a description of any occupational hazards known to exist;
- information about federal and state rights to organize and bargain collectively;
- information about federal and state rights to a safe workplace; and
- information about federal and state rights to be free from discrimination.

**Subd. 5. Civil Action.** Allows any person aggrieved by a violation of this section to file suit in any district court. The penalty for intentional violation of this law may be an award of damages up to and including an amount equal to the original damages plus injunctive relief.

**Subd. 6. Criminal Penalty.** An employer in violation of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

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## **Meatpacking Industry Workers Rights Ombudsman.**

**Subd. 1. Position Established.** Creates a meatpacking industry workers rights ombudsman to be appointed by the Senate and located in the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI.)

**Subd. 2. Duties.** Directs the ombudsman to inspect and review practices and procedures of meatpacking operations in the state and to ensure the following worker rights are protected:

- right to organize;
- right to a safe workplace;
- right to adequate facilities and the opportunity to use them;
- right to complete information;
- right to understand the information provided;
- right to existing state and federal benefits and rights;
- right to be free from discrimination;
- right to continuing training, including training of supervisors;
- right to compensation for work performed; and

- right to seek state help.

**Subd. 3. Access.** Specifies that the ombudsman or its designee shall have access to all meatpacking operating in the state at any time meatpacking products are being processed and industry workers are on the job.

**Subd. 4. Office.** Requires DOLI to provide necessary office space, furniture, equipment, supplies, and assistance as needed for the ombudsman.

**Subd. 5. Language preference.** Specifies that a preference among applicants for the ombudsman position will be given to persons who are fluent in Spanish.

**Subd. 6. Report.** Requires the ombudsman to report by December 1 of each year to the legislature and governor on any recommended action necessary to provide for the fair treatment of workers in the meatpacking industry.