

This bill proposes to modify the criteria for the amount of wages which a claimant must earn prior to his unemployment in order to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Under the provisions of the bill, if a claimant's total base-period earnings are not equal to or greater than the minimum qualifying wages as required in the division of the schedule of unemployment benefits which is appropriate to his high quarter wages, but are equal to the minimum qualifying wages as required in any of the next five lower divisions of that schedule, then the claimant will be eligible for a weekly benefit amount as specified at that next lower division. If the claimant's total base-period earnings are not equal to those specified in any of the next five lower divisions, the claimant is ineligible for benefits.

Unfortunately, the provisions of House Bill 6 conflict with the provisions of Senate Bill 655 which I have signed into law today. Both Senate Bill 655 and House Bill 6 amend Section 3(b)(1) of the Unemployment Insurance Law. Senate Bill 655 modifies the language, but not the substance, of the same paragraph which is amended by House Bill 6. Most importantly, Senate Bill 655 amends the schedule of benefits by increasing the maximum weekly benefit amount from \$106 to \$120. In contrast, House Bill 6 retains the current maximum weekly benefit amount of \$106.

If I were to sign into law House Bill 6 first and Senate Bill 655 second, the provisions of the former would be annulled by the provisions of the latter. House Bill 6 substitutes the word "five" for "three" in a sentence in Section 3(b)(1). However, Senate Bill 655 deletes that sentence from the statute.

If I were to sign Senate Bill 655 first and House Bill 6 second, then House Bill 6 would re-enact into law the existing schedule of benefits. In other words, House Bill 6 would repeal the increased maximum weekly benefit amount contained in Senate Bill 655 and would re-enact into law the lower maximum weekly benefit amount of \$106.

Because of the conflicts between the two bills, it is not possible to sign both into law. The Department of Human Resources informs me that Senate Bill 655 would inure to the benefit of approximately 75,000 claimants during the next fiscal year. In contrast, House Bill 6 would inure to the benefit of only 1,500 claimants. Because of the comparative importance of the bills, the Department has recommended that Senate Bill 655 be signed and House Bill 6 be vetoed.

For the reasons stated above, I am obliged to veto House Bill 6.
