



TTP Government Relations

On Thursday, May 10, 2018, Senate Bill No. 782 (Increases workers' compensation for loss of hand or foot, sponsored by Senator Paul Sarlo) was released from the Senate Labor Committee. The bill is a reintroduction of Senate Bill No. 676 which was vetoed in 2012 by former Governor Chris Christie who stated at the time that the bill "will have an adverse impact upon the business climate in our State by increasing workers' compensation costs for employers." This statement was made in spite of the fact that in 2010 the Office of Legislative Services prepared a fiscal analysis of the cost for increased payments for serious hand and foot injuries for New Jersey's workers that stated the bill "may have an indeterminate minimal cost impact on the State and its political subdivisions [and] since most cases go through the judicial process before the benefit is paid out to the injured worker—the cost associated with this bill will not have an impact for several years."

In both 2012 and 2018, the New Council on Safety and Health (COSH) has played the lead role in working with Legislators to advance this bill on behalf of injured workers. The difference today is with a worker friendly Governor, as opposed to former Governor Christie who was biased toward business, the odds of the bill becoming law are good.

At the May 10th Senate Labor Committee hearing, COSH members Lynne Kramer, Lisa Pezzano Mickey and a hand and foot claimant she represents and Dennis Baptista testified in support of Senate Bill No. 782—as was done by COSH members in 2011 before the Senate Labor Committee. Together, they dispelled false claims made by representatives of the insurance industry that if enacted into law the bill would cost employers \$20 million in payments and result in inflated workers' compensation premiums. They also pointed out the formula for determining compensation for hand and foot injuries has not been updated since the 1980's.

The bill is now in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee awaiting further review before it goes to the full Senate and, upon Senate passage, then to the General Assembly on its way to the desk of Governor Phil Murphy. And once again, COSH representatives will be working with the bill's sponsors to ensure that *ACCURATE* information is presented.