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Chapter

We Support Workers' Compensation Reforms in 2017

Did you know?

→Despite attempts at reform, costs continue to rise

Since 2011 reforms, State Fund premiums have increased over 6 percent

The National Academy of Social Insurance shows Washington still pays the highest benefits per covered worker in the nation

Washington's place in the "Oregon Study" has jumped 33 spots to 15th highest premium rates in the nation

The Department is increasing costs and assessments on self-insured employers in some instances by more than double

→Workers still aren't getting back to work

Washington's average days off work continues to be around 250, twice the national average and three times the Oregon average

Washington's total permanent disability rate continues to be around 1500 per year, two to three times the next highest states

Workers in some industries are making more money off workers' comp than they were at work

→The Department's answer is higher penalties and more employees

Rather than seek cost-reduction measures, the Department's legislative priorities include higher safety penalties on employers and nearly \$47 million dollars for 78 new full time employees

Our shared priorities:

→Occupational disease reform—make sure allowed claims arise out of and in the course of work

A 2012 study by the Upjohn Institute confirms that occupational disease claims are a growing percentage of overall claims, much more expensive, and much more likely to become lifetime pensions

→Structured settlement reform—allow responsible adults to settle their non-medical claims

A 2016 study by the Upjohn Institute confirms that there were no adverse effects or unintended consequences of allowing structured settlements in Washington, but many unnecessary administrative limitations hurt the program's effectiveness

→Benefit accuracy & simplification—make benefits fair to all workers & not a disincentive to work

The ongoing Benefit Accuracy Working Group's discussions have shown that in certain industries, workers' comp payments can exceed a worker's pre-injury wages, a strong disincentive to return to work

→Third-party claims—fix the reimbursement loophole

A 2010 decision of the Washington Supreme Court created a loophole incentivizing trial lawyers to game workers' comp money in third party cases so the system can't get reimbursed, raising costs and putting pressure on rates

→Self-Insured claims—allow greater claims management authority

JLARC performance audits in 1998 and 2015 and the Self-Insurance Ombuds have pointed out that L&I focus should be audit and oversight, while self-insured employers manage their own claims