



Women's Equality Act Enacted **Female Employees to Receive Strengthened Legal Rights**

On October 21, Governor Cuomo signed into law the [Women's Equality Act](#), a package of eight new acts intended to protect the rights of women in New York. Employers should be particularly aware of five of these acts which address workplace issues:

1. An employer must pay men and women equally for equal work, unless it can show that a difference in wages is for a reason other than gender (i.e. education), that it is job-related, and that no alternative employment practice is available that would allow equal pay. Further, employees may lawfully share wage information with each other. Willful violations of this law could result in liquidated damages of up to 300 percent of the wages found to be due.
2. Any employee may now bring a sexual harassment claim against an employer, regardless of the employer's number of employees.
3. A plaintiff who prevails on an employment discrimination claim based on gender may now recover attorneys' fees.
4. Employers may not discriminate against employees on the basis of family status (i.e. that an employee has a child).
5. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for employees with pregnancy-related medical conditions. The law defines a pregnancy-related medical condition as one which "inhibits the exercise of a normal bodily function" but does not prevent the employee from performing her job duties (or those of a job she seeks) in a reasonable manner. It does not require an employer to provide accommodations that would impose an undue hardship.

The full text of the new laws, which will take effect on January 19, 2016, can be seen [here](#). To avoid potentially costly unlawful discrimination claims, employers can contact Glaser & Weiner, LLP to consult with an attorney about their current workplace policies and determine which ones may require changes to comply with these laws.

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