

**First Regular Session  
Seventy-fourth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO**

**PREAMENDED**

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee  
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 23-0483.02 Jessica Herrera x4218

**SENATE BILL 23-111**

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**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Rodriguez,** Exum, Gonzales, Jaquez Lewis, Kolker, Marchman, Moreno, Priola, Sullivan,  
Winter F.

**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Woodrow,**

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**Senate Committees**

Local Government & Housing  
Appropriations

**House Committees**

State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs  
Appropriations

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

101      **CONCERNING PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' WORKPLACE PROTECTION FROM**  
102                    **EMPLOYER RETALIATION, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,**  
103                    **MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.**

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**Bill Summary**

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)*

The "National Labor Relations Act" does not apply to federal, state, or local governments and the "Colorado Labor Peace Act" excludes governmental entities, with an exception for mass transportation systems, leaving public employees without the protection afforded by these labor laws. The bill grants certain public employees, including individuals

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.  
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

SENATE  
3rd Reading Unamended  
April 17, 2023

SENATE  
Amended 2nd Reading  
April 14, 2023

employed by counties, municipalities, fire authorities, school districts, public colleges and universities, library districts, special districts, public defender's offices, the university of Colorado hospital authority, the Denver health and hospital authority, the general assembly, and a board of cooperative services, the right to:

- Discuss or express views regarding public employee representation or workplace issues;
- Engage in protected, concerted activity for the purpose of mutual aid or protection;
- Fully participate in the political process while off duty and not in uniform, including speaking with members of the public employer's governing body on terms and conditions of employment and any matter of public concern and engaging in other political activities in the same manner as other citizens of Colorado without discrimination, intimidation, or retaliation; and
- Organize, form, join, or assist an employee organization or refrain from organizing, forming, joining, or assisting an employee organization.

The bill also prohibits certain public employers from discriminating against, coercing, intimidating, interfering with, or imposing reprisals against a public employee for engaging in any of the rights granted.

The Colorado department of labor and employment (department) is charged with enforcing any alleged violation of these rights and is granted rule-making authority. A party may appeal the department's final decision to the Colorado court of appeals. The bill requires the court of appeals to give deference to the department.

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** article 32 to title  
3 29 as follows:

4 **ARTICLE 32**

5 **Protections For Public Workers**

6 **29-32-101. Short title.** THE SHORT TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE 32 IS  
7 THE "PROTECTIONS FOR PUBLIC WORKERS ACT".

8 **29-32-102. Legislative declaration.** (1) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
9 HEREBY DECLARES THAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE THE BACKBONE OF THE

1 STATE AND ENSURE THAT COLORADANS HAVE ACCESS TO STRONG PUBLIC  
2 SERVICES. HOWEVER, BECAUSE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE EXEMPT FROM  
3 PROTECTIONS AFFORDED BY THE "NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT"  
4 AND THE "COLORADO LABOR PEACE ACT", WHEN THEY SPEAK OUT ON  
5 ISSUES IN THEIR WORKPLACE OR COME TOGETHER WITH THEIR COWORKERS  
6 TO IMPROVE THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS, THEY CAN BE DISCIPLINED AND  
7 TERMINATED. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FURTHER DECLARES THAT PUBLIC  
8 EMPLOYEES SHOULD HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS AND SHOULD BE  
9 PROTECTED FROM RETALIATION, INCLUDING DISCIPLINE OR TERMINATION,  
10 IF THEY CHOOSE TO EXERCISE THESE RIGHTS:

11 (a) TO SPEAK OUT ON ISSUES OF PUBLIC CONCERN AND FULLY  
12 ENGAGE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS OUTSIDE OF WORK IN THE SAME  
13 MANNER AS OTHER CITIZENS OF COLORADO;

14 (b) TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT CONCERNS WITH THE TERMS AND  
15 CONDITIONS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT;

16 (c) TO ENGAGE IN PROTECTED CONCERTED ACTIVITY FOR THE  
17 PURPOSE OF MUTUAL AID OR PROTECTION;

18 (d) TO ORGANIZE, FORM, JOIN, OR ASSIST AN EMPLOYEE  
19 ORGANIZATION OR TO REFRAIN FROM DOING SO; AND

20 (e) TO PURSUE AN EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION WITH THEIR  
21 COWORKERS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE.

22 **29-32-103. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS ARTICLE 32, UNLESS THE  
23 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

24 (1) "COUNTY" MEANS ONLY:

25 (a) A CITY AND COUNTY; AND

26 (b) A COUNTY WITH A POPULATION OF LESS THAN SEVEN  
27 THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PEOPLE PURSUANT TO THE OFFICIAL FIGURES OF

1 THE MOST RECENT UNITED STATES DECENNIAL CENSUS.

2 (2) "DIVISION" MEANS THE DIVISION OF LABOR STANDARDS AND  
3 STATISTICS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT.

4 (3) "EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION" MEANS AN ORGANIZATION  
5 INDEPENDENT OF THE EMPLOYER IN WHICH PUBLIC EMPLOYEES MAY  
6 PARTICIPATE AND THAT EXISTS FOR THE PURPOSE, IN WHOLE OR IN PART,  
7 OF ACTING ON BEHALF OF AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC  
8 EMPLOYEES CONCERNING PUBLIC EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCES, LABOR  
9 DISPUTES, WAGES, HOURS, AND OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF  
10 EMPLOYMENT. "EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION" INCLUDES ANY AGENTS OR  
11 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION DESIGNATED BY THE  
12 EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION.

13 (4) "GOVERNING BODY" MEANS THE ELECTED OR APPOINTED  
14 REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF A PUBLIC EMPLOYER.

15 (5) "PUBLIC EMPLOYEE" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYED BY A  
16 PUBLIC EMPLOYER; EXCEPT THOSE EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED IN THE  
17 PERSONNEL SYSTEM OF THE STATE ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 13 OF ARTICLE  
18 XII OF THE STATE CONSTITUTION.

19 (6) (a) "PUBLIC EMPLOYER" MEANS:

20 (I) A COUNTY OR A MUNICIPALITY;

21 (II) A DISTRICT, BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, SPECIAL  
22 DISTRICT CREATED PURSUANT TO TITLE 32, AUTHORITY, OR OTHER  
23 POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE, A COUNTY, OR A MUNICIPALITY;

24 (III) THE COLORADO SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND,  
25 ESTABLISHED IN ARTICLE 80 OF TITLE 22;

26 (IV) A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AS DEFINED IN  
27 SECTION 23-18-102 (10)(a), AND A LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGE OPERATING

1 PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 71 OF TITLE 23;

2 (V) THE OFFICE OF STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER CREATED IN SECTION

3 21-1-101;

4 (VI) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

5 CREATED IN SECTION 23-21-503;

6 (VII) THE DENVER HEALTH AND HOSPITAL AUTHORITY CREATED

7 IN SECTION 25-29-103;

8 (VIII) THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE STAFF, THE LEGISLATIVE

9 COUNCIL STAFF, THE OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE LEGAL SERVICES, THE STAFF

10 OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

11 AND THE SENATE SERVICES STAFF;

12 (IX) THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY CAUCUS STAFF OF THE HOUSE

13 OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE; ■

14 (X) A BOARD OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES ESTABLISHED PURSUANT

15 TO THE "BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES ACT OF 1965", ARTICLE 5 OF

16 TITLE 22.

17 (XI) ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT AS DEFINED IN SECTION 22-7-1003

18 (20);

19 (XII) A DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL PURSUANT TO PART 1 OF

20 ARTICLE 30.5 OF TITLE 22; OR

21 (XIII) AN INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOL WHICH MEANS A CHARTER

22 SCHOOL AUTHORIZED BY THE STATE CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE

23 PURSUANT TO PART 5 OF ARTICLE 30.5 OF TITLE 22.

24 (b) "PUBLIC EMPLOYER" DOES NOT INCLUDE THE STATE OR ANY

25 POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE WHERE THE STATE OR POLITICAL

26 SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE ACQUIRES OR OPERATES A MASS

27 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, OR ANY CARRIER BY RAILROAD, EXPRESS

1 COMPANY, OR SLEEPING CAR COMPANY SUBJECT TO THE FEDERAL  
2 "RAILWAY LABOR ACT", 45 U.S.C. SEC. 151 ET SEQ., AS AMENDED.  
3 "PUBLIC EMPLOYER" DOES NOT INCLUDE THE STATE OR ANY POLITICAL  
4 SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE, EXCEPT FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
5 EDUCATION, LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGES, AND STATE AGENCIES SPECIFIED  
6 IN SUBSECTION (6)(a) OF THIS SECTION.

7 (7) "UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE" MEANS A VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS  
8 OR OBLIGATIONS DESCRIBED IN THIS ARTICLE 32. NOTHING IN THIS  
9 ARTICLE 32 SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO MEAN THE RIGHT OR OBLIGATION TO  
10 RECOGNIZE OR TO NEGOTIATE A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT.

11 **29-32-104. Protections for public workers.** (1) EXCEPT AS  
12 PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (2) OF THIS SECTION, A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE HAS  
13 THE RIGHT TO:

14 (a) DISCUSS OR EXPRESS THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE'S VIEWS  
15 REGARDING PUBLIC EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION, WORKPLACE ISSUES, OR  
16 THE RIGHTS GRANTED TO THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE IN THIS ARTICLE 32;

17 (b) ENGAGE IN PROTECTED, CONCERTED ACTIVITY FOR THE  
18 PURPOSE OF MUTUAL AID OR PROTECTION;

19 (c) FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS WHILE OFF  
20 DUTY AND NOT IN UNIFORM, INCLUDING:

21 (I) SPEAKING WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC EMPLOYER'S  
22 GOVERNING BODY ON TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND ANY  
23 MATTER OF PUBLIC CONCERN; AND

24 (II) ENGAGING IN OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE SAME  
25 MANNER AS OTHER CITIZENS OF COLORADO, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION,  
26 INTIMIDATION, OR RETALIATION; AND

27 (d) ORGANIZE, FORM, JOIN, OR ASSIST AN EMPLOYEE

1 ORGANIZATION OR REFRAIN FROM ORGANIZING, FORMING, JOINING, OR  
2 ASSISTING AN EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION.

3 (2) A PUBLIC EMPLOYER DESCRIBED IN SECTION 29-32-103  
4 (6)(a)(VIII) MAY LIMIT THE RIGHTS OF AN EMPLOYEE DESCRIBED IN  
5 29-32-104 (1)(c) TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE  
6 NONPARTISAN ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER.

7 (3) A PUBLIC EMPLOYER SHALL NOT:

8 (a) DISCRIMINATE AGAINST, COERCE, INTIMIDATE, INTERFERE  
9 WITH, OR IMPOSE REPRISALS AGAINST, OR THREATEN TO DISCRIMINATE  
10 AGAINST, COERCE, INTIMIDATE, INTERFERE WITH, OR IMPOSE REPRISALS  
11 AGAINST, ANY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE FOR ENGAGING IN ANY OF THE RIGHTS  
12 DESCRIBED IN THIS ARTICLE 32;

13 (b) DOMINATE OR INTERFERE IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF AN  
14 EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION; OR

15 (c) DISCHARGE OR DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE  
16 BECAUSE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE HAS FILED AN AFFIDAVIT, PETITION, OR  
17 COMPLAINT OR GIVEN ANY INFORMATION OR TESTIMONY PURSUANT TO  
18 THIS ARTICLE 32, OR BECAUSE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE HAS FORMED,  
19 JOINED, ASSISTED, OR CHOSEN TO BE REPRESENTED BY AN EMPLOYEE  
20 ORGANIZATION.

21 **29-32-105. Enforcement - rules.** (1) AN AGGRIEVED PARTY IS  
22 BARRED FROM FILING A CLAIM THAT ALLEGES THAT A PUBLIC EMPLOYER  
23 HAS VIOLATED THIS ARTICLE 32 UNLESS THE CLAIM IS FILED WITHIN SIX  
24 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE ON WHICH THE AGGRIEVED PARTY KNEW OR  
25 REASONABLY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN OF THE ALLEGED VIOLATION.

26 (2) THE DIVISION SHALL ENFORCE THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS  
27 OF THIS ARTICLE 32 AND PROMULGATE RULES AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO

1 IMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE 32. THE DIVISION SHALL CREATE AND  
2 ADMINISTER A PROCESS TO ACCEPT, REVIEW, AND INVESTIGATE  
3 COMPLAINTS OR OTHER LEADS CONCERNING A VIOLATION THAT, IN THE  
4 DIRECTOR'S GOOD FAITH DISCRETION AND JUDGMENT, WARRANTS  
5 INVESTIGATION. THE DIVISION ALSO MAY:

6 (a) PUBLISH GUIDANCE ON OTHER POSSIBLE EMPLOYEE REDRESS  
7 FOR THOSE WHOSE CLAIMS ARE NOT INVESTIGATED; AND

8 (b) AT ITS DISCRETION, PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE  
9 RESOLUTION CONSISTENT WITH SECTIONS 8-3-112 AND 8-3-113.

10 (3) THE DIVISION HAS THE AUTHORITY TO ADJUDICATE UNFAIR  
11 LABOR PRACTICE CHARGES AND ISSUE DECISIONS PURSUANT TO ARTICLE  
12 3 OF TITLE 8.

13 (4) A PARTY MAY APPEAL THE DIVISION'S FINAL DECISION TO THE  
14 COLORADO COURT OF APPEALS AND THE COURT'S REVIEW MUST BE  
15 LIMITED TO DETERMINING WHETHER THE DIVISION HAS EXCEEDED ITS  
16 JURISDICTION OR ABUSED ITS DISCRETION BASED ON THE EVIDENCE IN THE  
17 RECORD BEFORE THE DIVISION.

18 (5) THE COURT OF APPEALS SHALL UPHOLD THE ACTION OF THE  
19 DIVISION AND TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO ENFORCE THE ACTION UNLESS  
20 THE COURT CONCLUDES THAT THE FINAL DECISION IS:

21 (a) ARBITRARY, CAPRICIOUS, OR AN ABUSE OF DISCRETION; OR

22 (b) OTHERWISE NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW.

23 (6) THE DIVISION MAY ENFORCE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE 32  
24 THROUGH THE IMPOSITION OF APPROPRIATE ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES,  
25 INCLUDING REMEDIES TO ADDRESS ANY LOSS SUFFERED BY A PUBLIC  
26 EMPLOYEE OR GROUP OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FROM UNLAWFUL CONDUCT.

27 (7) ANY FUNDS APPROPRIATED TO COVER THE DIVISION'S COSTS



1 RELATING TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF THIS ARTICLE 32 MUST BE FROM THE  
2 GENERAL FUND.

3 (8) NO PUBLIC EMPLOYER HAS THE AUTHORITY TO WAIVE ANY  
4 PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE, AND ANY LAW, RULE, OR POLICY THAT  
5 AUTHORIZES A WAIVER IS NULL AND VOID. ==

6 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 29-5-215 as  
7 follows:

8 **29-5-215. Protect public workers.** ON AND AFTER THE EFFECTIVE  
9 DATE OF ARTICLE 32 OF THIS TITLE 29, FIREFIGHTERS SHALL HAVE ALL THE  
10 RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS ENUMERATED UNDER ARTICLE 32 OF THIS TITLE  
11 29.

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13 **SECTION 3. Appropriation.** (1) For the 2023-24 state fiscal  
14 year, \$151,751 is appropriated to the department of labor and  
15 employment. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement  
16 this act, the department may use this appropriation as follows:

17 (a) \$94,651 for use by the division of labor standards and statistics  
18 for program costs related to labor standards, which amount is based on an  
19 assumption that the division will require an additional 0.9 FTE; and

20 (b) \$57,100 for the purchase of legal services.

21 (2) For the 2023-24 state fiscal year, \$57,100 is appropriated to  
22 the department of law. This appropriation is from reappropriated funds  
23 received from the department of labor and employment under subsection  
24 (1)(b) of this section and is based on an assumption that the department  
25 of law will require an additional 0.3 FTE. To implement this act, the  
26 department of law may use this appropriation to provide legal services for  
27 the department of labor and employment.

1           **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** Section  
2   29-32-105 (3) of this act takes effect on July 1, 2024, and the remainder  
3   of this act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration  
4   of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly;  
5   except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of  
6   article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or  
7   part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will  
8   not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be  
9   held in November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of  
10   the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.