

ERISA Preemption – Health Reform Waiver Proposal

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29 U.S.C. § 1144

(a) Superseded; effective date

Except as provided in subsections (b) and (f) of this section, the provisions of this subchapter and subchapter III shall supersede any and all State laws insofar as they may now or hereafter relate to any employee benefit plan described in section 1003(a) of this title and not exempt under section 1003(b) of this title. This section shall take effect on January 1, 1975.

(b) Construction and application

- (1) This section shall not apply with respect to any cause of action which arose, or any act or omission which occurred, before January 1, 1975.
- (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to exempt or relieve any person from any law of any State which regulates insurance, banking, or securities.

(B) Neither an employee benefit plan described in section 1003(a) of this title, which is not exempt under section 1003(b) of this title (other than a plan established primarily for the purpose of providing death benefits), nor any trust established under such a plan, shall be deemed to be an insurance company or other insurer, bank, trust company, or investment company or to be engaged in the business of insurance or banking for purposes of any law of any State purporting to regulate insurance companies, insurance contracts, banks, trust companies, or investment companies.
- (3) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit use by the Secretary of services or facilities of a State agency as permitted under section 1136 of this title.
- (4) Subsection (a) shall not apply to any generally applicable criminal law of a State.
- (5) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), subsection (a) shall not apply to the Hawaii Prepaid Health Care Act (Haw.Rev.Stat. §§ 393-1 through 393-51).

(B) Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall be construed to exempt from subsection (a)--
 - (i) any State tax law relating to employee benefit plans, or
 - (ii) any amendment of the Hawaii Prepaid Health Care Act enacted after September 2, 1974, to the extent it provides for more than the effective administration of such Act as in effect on such date.
- (C) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), parts 1 and 4 of this subtitle, and the preceding sections of this part to the extent they govern matters which are governed by the provisions of such parts 1 and 4, shall supersede the Hawaii Prepaid Health Care Act (as in effect on or after January 14, 1983), but the Secretary may enter into cooperative arrangements under this paragraph and section 1136 of this title with officials of the State of Hawaii to assist them in effectuating the policies of provisions of such Act which are superseded by such parts 1 and 4 and the preceding sections of this part.
- (6) (A) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section—
 - (i) in the case of an employee welfare benefit plan which is a multiple employer welfare arrangement and is fully insured (or which is a multiple employer welfare arrangement subject to an exemption under subparagraph (B)), any law of any State which regulates insurance may apply to such

arrangement to the extent that such law provides—

- (I) standards, requiring the maintenance of specified levels of reserves and specified levels of contributions, which any such plan, or any trust established under such a plan, must meet in order to be considered under such law able to pay benefits in full when due, and
 - (II) provisions to enforce such standards, and
- (ii) in the case of any other employee welfare benefit plan which is a multiple employer welfare arrangement, in addition to this subchapter, any law of any State which regulates insurance may apply to the extent not inconsistent with the preceding sections of this subchapter.
- (B) The Secretary may, under regulations which may be prescribed by the Secretary, exempt from subparagraph (A)(ii), individually or by class, multiple employer welfare arrangements which are not fully insured. Any such exemption may be granted with respect to any arrangement or class of arrangements only if such arrangement or each arrangement which is a member of such class meets the requirements of [section 1002\(1\)](#) and [section 1003](#) of this title necessary to be considered an employee welfare benefit plan to which this subchapter applies.
- (C) Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall affect the manner or extent to which the provisions of this subchapter apply to an employee welfare benefit plan which is not a multiple employer welfare arrangement and which is a plan, fund, or program participating in, subscribing to, or otherwise using a multiple employer welfare arrangement to fund or administer benefits to such plan's participants and beneficiaries.
- (D) For purposes of this paragraph, a multiple employer welfare arrangement shall be considered fully insured only if the terms of the arrangement provide for benefits the amount of all of which the Secretary determines are guaranteed under a contract, or policy of insurance, issued by an insurance company, insurance service, or insurance organization, qualified to conduct business in a State.
- (7) Subsection (a) shall not apply to qualified domestic relations orders (within the meaning of [section 1056\(d\)\(3\)\(B\)\(i\)](#) of this title), qualified medical child support orders (within the meaning of [section 1169\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)](#) of this title), and the provisions of law referred to in [section 1169\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#) of this title to the extent they apply to qualified medical child support orders.
- (8) Subsection (a) of this section shall not be construed to preclude any State cause of action—
- (A) with respect to which the State exercises its acquired rights under [section 1169\(b\)\(3\)](#) of this title with respect to a group health plan (as defined in [section 1167\(1\)](#) of this title), or
 - (B) for recoupment of payment with respect to items or services pursuant to a State plan for medical assistance approved under title XIX of the Social Security Act which would not have been payable if such acquired rights had been executed before payment with respect to such items or services by the group health plan.
- (9) For additional provisions relating to group health plans, see [section 1191](#) of this title.

(c) Definitions

For purposes of this section:

- (1) The term “State law” includes all laws, decisions, rules, regulations, or other State action having the effect of law, of any State. A law of the United States applicable only to the District of Columbia shall be treated as a State law rather than a law of the United States.
- (2) The term “State” includes a State, any political subdivisions thereof, or any agency or instrumentality of either, which purports to regulate, directly or indirectly, the terms and conditions of employee benefit plans covered by this subchapter.
- (3) The term “group health plan” includes any “employee welfare benefit plan” as defined in [section 1002\(1\)](#) of this title which is established or maintained by an employer, an employee organization, or both, that

provides medical care for participants or their dependents directly or through insurance, reimbursement, or otherwise.

(4) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Labor.

(d) Alteration, amendment, modification, invalidation, impairment, or supersedure of any law of the United States prohibited

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to alter, amend, modify, invalidate, impair, or supersede any law of the United States (except as provided in [sections 1031](#) and [1137\(b\)](#) of this title) or any rule or regulation issued under any such law.

(e) Automatic contribution arrangements

- (1)** Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, this subchapter shall supersede any law of a State which would directly or indirectly prohibit or restrict the inclusion in any plan of an automatic contribution arrangement. The Secretary may prescribe regulations which would establish minimum standards that such an arrangement would be required to satisfy in order for this subsection to apply in the case of such arrangement.
- (2)** For purposes of this subsection, the term “automatic contribution arrangement” means an arrangement—
 - (A)** under which a participant may elect to have the plan sponsor make payments as contributions under the plan on behalf of the participant, or to the participant directly in cash,
 - (B)** under which a participant is treated as having elected to have the plan sponsor make such contributions in an amount equal to a uniform percentage of compensation provided under the plan until the participant specifically elects not to have such contributions made (or specifically elects to have such contributions made at a different percentage), and
 - (C)** under which such contributions are invested in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary under [section 1104\(c\)\(5\)](#) of this title.
- (3)** **(A)** The plan administrator of an automatic contribution arrangement shall, within a reasonable period before such plan year, provide to each participant to whom the arrangement applies for such plan year notice of the participant’s rights and obligations under the arrangement which--
 - (i)** is sufficiently accurate and comprehensive to apprise the participant of such rights and obligations, and
 - (ii)** is written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average participant to whom the arrangement applies.**(B)** A notice shall not be treated as meeting the requirements of subparagraph (A) with respect to a participant unless—
 - (i)** the notice includes an explanation of the participant’s right under the arrangement not to have elective contributions made on the participant’s behalf (or to elect to have such contributions made at a different percentage),
 - (ii)** the participant has a reasonable period of time, after receipt of the notice described in clause (i) and before the first elective contribution is made, to make such election, and
 - (iii)** the notice explains how contributions made under the arrangement will be invested in the absence of any investment election by the participant.

(f) Waiver for state flexibility. A State may apply to the Secretary for the waiver of section 1144(a) or section 1144(b)(2)(B) of this Part or both provisions as applied to State laws implicating group health plans defined in section 1144(c)(3).

(1) Such application shall--

(A) be filed at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require;

(B) contain such information as the Secretary may require, including--

(i) a description of the State law or laws which would fall within the scope of the requested waiver, and

(ii) the requested waiver's likely impact on group health plans operating within the State; and

(C) refer to any related waiver applications submitted by the State under 42 U.S.C. § 18052, titles XVIII, XIX, and XXI of the Social Security Act [42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq., 1396 et seq., 1397aa et seq.], or any other Federal law relating to the provision of health care items or services.

(2) Waiver consideration and transparency.

(A) In general. An application for a waiver under this section shall be considered by the Secretary in accordance with the regulations described in subparagraph (B).

(B) Regulations. The Secretary shall promulgate regulations relating to waivers under this section that provide--

(i) a process for public notice and comment at the State level, including public hearings, sufficient to ensure a meaningful level of public input; and

(ii) a process for providing public notice and comment after the application is received by the Secretary, that is sufficient to ensure a meaningful level of public input and that does not impose requirements that are in addition to, or duplicative of, requirements imposed under the Administrative Procedures Act, or requirements that are unreasonable or unnecessarily burdensome with respect to State compliance.

(C) Report. The Secretary shall annually report to Congress concerning actions taken by the Secretary with respect to applications for waivers under this section.

(3) Scope of waiver. The Secretary may not waive under this section any Federal law or requirement that is not within the authority of the Secretary.

(4) Determinations by Secretary.

(A) Time for determination.

The Secretary shall make a determination under subsection (f)(1) not later than 180 days after the receipt of an application from a State under such subsection.

(B) Effect of determination.

(i) Granting of waivers. If the Secretary determines to grant a waiver under subsection (f)(1), the Secretary shall notify the State involved of such determination and the terms and effectiveness of such waiver.

(ii) Denial of waiver. If the Secretary determines a waiver should not be granted under subsection (f)(1), the Secretary shall notify the State involved, and the appropriate committees of Congress of such determination and the reasons for the denial.

(5) Term of waiver. The Secretary may limit the duration of a waiver granted under section (f)(1) to not less than 5 years. If the Secretary grants a waiver with a limited duration, the State may request continuation of such waiver on the expiration of the initial term.