

# THURSDAY'S TAKE 5!

The Louisiana Workers' Compensation Law exists to ensure that workers injured on the job receive immediate quality medical care for their injuries so they can return to work promptly. The law provides for financial assistance while the injured worker is away from work recovering. Employers, through insurance, cover the full cost of this medical care and financial assistance, generally from a carrier or industry fund.

For decades, LABI has worked to ensure that the system meets worker needs while remaining affordable for employers. Achieving this balance is not easy, given the many separate interests active in this system. However, much progress has been made, and we believe more can be done to enhance the system for the benefit of employers and their workers. We encourage the new Legislature and Governor to take action on these five recommendations for enhancing the workers' compensation system's effectiveness and efficiency.

## Maintain a balanced Workers' Compensation Advisory.

Current state law calls for the Governor to appoint a group of workers' compensation stakeholders to monitor the system in order to advise the Governor and Legislature. Early in the term of former Louisiana Governor Blanco, LABI spearheaded a bipartisan effort to establish the WCAC as a mechanism for improving the functions of the workers' compensation system while limiting contentious annual legislative battles. LABI believes the WCAC offers the best chance for addressing workers compensation issues constructively while promoting cooperation among all stakeholders in the state.

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## Protect the process and intent of Louisiana's medical guidelines.

Current state law outlines a process and framework for medical guidelines that prescribe appropriate treatment for worker injuries. This bipartisan effort is detailed in state regulations that assure that injured workers are provided quality medical care in a timely manner set forth in the guideline dispute rules and backed by best-evidence medicine so they can return to work sooner.

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## Implement an evidence-based pharmacy formulary.

Although Louisiana's current medical guidelines prescribe appropriate pharmaceutical treatment for workers' compensation patients, a more comprehensive approach would be beneficial to employers and workers alike. A pharmacy formulary based in medical evidence should be created for physicians to more effectively prescribe reasonable and necessary drugs.

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## Update the medical fee schedule.

State law has long required a fee schedule for provider payment for workers' compensation treatment, which has not been fully updated since the early 1990s. The medical fee schedule should be revamped to provide clarity and consistency in treatment charges of providers serving workers' compensation patients.



## Address return-to-work delays.

Despite ranking as a top state for worker safety, Louisiana's workers' compensation patients are out of work longer than most states. The state needs a clear, objective process for determining when an injured worker can return to the job following an injury, removing delays and hurdles that currently impede employees from returning to work.