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Rich Meneghello (00:00)

Welcome to The FP5: Five Things for Your 9-to-5. We help employers make sense of the fast moving world of workplace law and compliance by breaking topics down into five parts. I'm Rich Meneghello, Chief Content Officer here at Fisher Phillips.

Today, we're sharing five things you need to know about California's upcoming legislative session. I am thrilled to be joined by one of my good friends in the firm, Ben Ebbink, who co-chairs our firm's Government Relations Practice Group. Ben, how are you?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (00:32)

Doing well, greetings from the great state of California.

Rich Meneghello (00:36)

Ben, you have been on my AI Forum webinars more times than I can count, this is your first podcast episode! How are you feeling?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (00:44)

I'm excited you know my mom always said I had a face for radio so I think this is my natural forum.

Rich Meneghello (00:52)

I hope you do well as well, Ben. We're all rooting for you. This is essentially an audition though, to see if you get invited back to future podcasts.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (01:01)

Ah I'm super nervous then, but let's see how it goes.

Rich Meneghello (01:03)

Ben, for those who don't know Ben, I feel like everyone knows Ben, but for those who don't know Ben, you are the co-chair of our firm's Government Relations Practice Group and you split your time between Sacramento and DC, handling all things government on a national level, but also in California. You must know the flight between Sacramento and DC very well, I'm guessing.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (01:25)

Yeah, it's unfortunately not too many direct flights from Sacramento. It's a smaller airport. I'm usually, you can usually find me in Denver or Chicago running across the airport frantically trying to catch my connection. But yeah, I'm pretty familiar with all the routes.

Rich Meneghello (01:39)

Folks in the audience don't try to get Ben's autograph when he's running through the concourse because he's got a plane to catch. But before Ben was a lawyer here with our firm advising employers, you spent nearly 15 years as the chief policy advisor on labor and employment for the California State Assembly. So that's how you know the legislative process so well.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (01:59)

Yeah, it was a good training ground. I spent about 15 years there. So every bill dealing with labor and employment in California during those 15 years came across our committee and we were involved in shaping it, analyzing it, working on amendments, working between the parties. So it was a good training ground. Really showed me how policy is made in California and I continue my work now at Fisher Phillips has focused pretty extensively on what California is up to because California's super busy always pushing the envelope. So yeah, it was a natural segue for me.

Rich Meneghello (02:31)

And that's why Ben is the ultimate insider's insider when it comes to California stuff. So not only is he somebody like in some other firms that's going to be monitoring legislation, Ben not just reads the bills, he knows how they're written, why they were written that way, what happens to them next. That's why we love bringing you in on these. Ben, before we dive in, how many workplace law bills are you tracking this term?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (02:53)

So it's interesting, this year, so California does two year legislative sessions, but it's basically two full run throughs of the legislative process. So this year there were 1800, a little shy of 1800 bills introduced. There's only 120 legislators in California. So those 120 legislators introduced 1800 bills in 2026. Now not all of them, thank goodness, deal with labor and employment.

But I essentially have to review every bill and find out if it does touch on employment. So that's a lot of work. The interesting thing is this year, that's the fewest amount of bill introductions in 20 years. By like 300 or 400 bills. So there's something going on this year. There's just not as much legislative activity in California. Even though it's still 1,800 bills, that's a down year for California.

Rich Meneghello (03:44)

Okay, before we dive into our five things, final question, what's the general timeline we're looking at?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (03:50)

So we're still pretty early in legislative year. Bills were introduced at the end of February. Policy committees are beginning to hear the bills. They've got to go all the way through the process. They've got to go over to the other house, go through committees over there. We're looking until about the end of August. End of August is the deadline for the legislature to pass bills. Then they'll send it on to Governor Newsom. He'll have another month, so like the end of September, to sign and veto bills. So we've got a long road ahead, and bills can change a lot between now and then. We're on the very early stages of that process.

Rich Meneghello (04:21)

Okay, and I lied when I said that was my last question because I have one more question and then we'll dive in. Governor Newsom is term limited, so this is his last hurrah as governor. How do you think that's going to impact and, and he's obviously positioning himself for a run at the White House. How do you think those things are going to impact his view of some of the bills he's going to be faced on his desk?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (04:41)

I think it's got to have an impact, right? Anytime somebody is running for higher office, they're looking at how things are going to read for that next election. Now, conventional wisdom is a governor from the state of California, pretty

blue state, perceived as a pretty liberal governor, that he's going to want to moderate himself in terms of gearing up for a presidential election. So some speculation, that could lead to him taking a closer look at some of these bills he might otherwise sign because he's looking to moderate his stance. A lot of speculation, but I think it definitely is gonna come into play on bills he acts on this year.

Rich Meneghello (05:23)

All right, well, let's dive in then. There are five things that employers need to know about the California workplace law bills here in 2026. And the first thing is, even if you out there listening don't have a single employee in California, you still need to pay attention to these bills. Ben, somewhere out there, someone's listening, has no workers at all in California. Why should they care about this episode?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (05:46)

Yeah, so we've got this old phrase that I've used for years and years that what starts in California does not stay in California. And I think this is still universally true when it comes to labor and employment law, primarily true, maybe not universally. But California likes to be cutting edge. And so a lot of the legislation in labor and employment starts first in California, then it's copied and replicated elsewhere. Nine times out of 10, the issue will start in California. We always tell people, if you want to see what's coming to your state in three years, look to what California is doing now.

The other thing I would say is, and this is frequently more so with the advent of remote work, there are more and more companies that are just national corporations and you've got employees all over. Before COVID, a lot of companies used to say, well, we operate in every state or we have employees in every state except California. We're just not going to go there. The rules are too crazy. You don't really have that luxury anymore. To the extent you have remote workers, they're going to be all over. Odds are somebody's going to be in California.

So the days of saying, can pick and choose and not have to follow or pay attention to what's going on in California, I think for a lot of employers are gone. And then, even if you're just a national employer, there's so many specific policies that come up and are different from state to state to state. You could have 50 different paid sick leave policies. You could have 50 different consumer data privacy policies.

At some point, it reaches a tipping point and employers say, I just want it one standard across the board. And I'm going to default for the most protective standard that applies to workers. again, nine times out of 10, they're going to look to California and say, we just want that across the board. So that's why I think it's, even if you're not in California, you think to yourself, I don't do business in California, you probably do. It's worth paying attention to what California is working on.

Rich Meneghello (07:39)

Makes total sense. Ben, before we dive in further to thing number two, when you look at this year's package of bills from a workplace law standpoint, is there a through line? Is there some coherent agenda that you're seeing?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (07:52)

Well, we're seeing a big push from organized labor in California, which has a lot of sway. It's a blue state. A real emphasis on IT, technology, AI, and the workplace. And so lots of package of bills around AI, workplace surveillance, and some issues we're going to talk about. But this has sort of been made into an existential issue for the labor movement, at least how they're approaching it in California.

They're very concerned about AI and what that means for jobs. And so they're really pushing a pretty aggressive legislative agenda across all those areas, but under the common theme of, you know, we need to protect workers and jobs from this encroaching area of technology and AI.

Rich Meneghello (08:40)

Okay, okay. Well, that leads us, I think, perfectly to our second thing. California is getting really close to telling employers they can't let a robot fire workers. And if AI is going to eliminate jobs, that you got to give people notice. So you can't get Rich Meneghello and Ben Ebbink in a room without talking about AI. So let's dive right into it. Ben, tell us about the AI bills that employers need to care about this session in front of California.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (09:13)

Well, the one bill, and this is the second year we've seen a bill, which has the greatest title, so I like to say it as many times as possible, is the No Robo Bosses Act. Not robot, robo. No robo bosses. So this is SB 947. Pretty similar to a bill, SB 7, that the governor vetoed last year. They made a few changes to respond to the governor's veto message dealing with whether you have to provide pre-use notice of AI technology.

So they got rid of that, but they basically kept the remaining elements of the bill. So the bill has to do with, you have to provide post-use notice. Anytime you use AI to assist in an employment-related decision, you have to provide notice to the worker. But then really, to your point, you cannot discipline, terminate, or deactivate--which I think is getting at independent contractors being deactivated from platforms--you cannot discipline, terminate, or deactivate someone solely using AI. There's got to be a human reviewer involved in that process. So guess that's where they get the "no-robo bosses."

Rich Meneghello (10:18)

And when it comes to that, the "solely" part, Ben, we've seen something, the first workplace law in the country years ago, passed in New York City said that you have to have human involvement and they thought in these kinds of key decisions when you're using AI and employers really just realized that had no teeth to it because you could just have a human rubber stamp an AI decision at the end. Is that what you're potentially looking at here in California too or do think this is going to have more teeth?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (10:46)

I think it's going to have more teeth and they've sort of walked it back. So the bill last year used the term "solely." The bill this year talks about assisting with such a decision. And when an automated decision making assists in such a decision, you have to have a full human review or independent investigation. So I think they're going to try to take the lesson, so to speak, from New York and make sure that there's no loophole, and they're actually walking back some concessions they made on the bill last year.

Rich Meneghello (11:16)

Okay. So the second bill that I know that we're looking at related to AI in California has to do with WARN-style notifications. And for those unfamiliar, the WARN Act at a federal level requires employers to give advance notice if they're making sort of a mass layoff or closing a plant or something like that. Tell us what the California proposal has to do with AI-related layoffs and warn notifications.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (11:43)

Yeah, so this is a bill essentially mimicking the WARN Act, but it's broader in many ways. For any time an employer has a layoff due to AI or technology disruption. And so any time it impacts either 25 employees or 25% of your workforce, whichever is more, you would have this very similar to WARN Act obligation to provide advance written notice to your workers. This is a 90-day notice, the act, the federal WARN Act, and the California WARN Act are 60 days. So this is an even longer standard. So you would have to provide this notice just like you do with the WARN Act.

There's a few concerns with this beyond the notice. First of all, you would be prohibited from terminating any employee for those 90 days. You made the decision you're going to make a layoff based on AI or technology. You can't fire somebody for that 90 day period.

That's not something that's generally contained in the WARN Act. And you could have an employee who engages in serious misconduct. You can't terminate them during that 90-day period. Yeah, so pretty alarming. Then they've got this unique provision that's kind of a right-to-bid provision that says if you're a larger employer, if you have 100 or more employees, you have to give any laid-off employee the right of first refusal for hiring into any other position they may be qualified for.

So they're kind of permanently on this list and before you can hire somebody from the outside, you have to go back to those laid-off employees. And then the notice itself is pretty complex and makes you provide all very detailed information about the technology that was used, the purposes for which it was used. And I think potentially could require disclosure of some proprietary information that you utilize in these tools. So it's a pretty wide reaching. It's not just we're laying you off, it's a very detailed laundry list of specific information about the AI tools you're using and the purposes for which you're using it.

Rich Meneghello (13:45)

And then the third bill, AI related, that I know you're tracking is this AB 1898 about a notification to workers with AI being used. Tell us about that one, Ben.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (13:57)

So I mentioned how the No Robo Bosses Act SB 947 this year eliminates that pre-use notification requirement. Well, that's been picked up with AB 1898. So it really picks up the gap there. AB 1898 is a notification bill. And it's pretty broadly worded. It requires you to provide notice to employees even if an AI tool just indirectly impacts or merely assists with an employment decision, no matter how minimal. It could be a ministerial accounting administrative function that AI assists with. If it's related to employment, it's got to be notified.

So the concern is that employers are going to be required to send out these notices all the time for a wide range of tools and technologies that we don't usually think of as AI, but they're going to fall within a broad definition of AI here. And it's just going to be flooding employees with notices that they don't read, they don't mean anything. And so it's just, you know, an administrative burden.

Rich Meneghello (15:00)

I use my Outlook spell check while crafting the dismissal notice and that's AI generated.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (15:07)

It assisted you in making that decision, right?

Rich Meneghello (15:10)

There you go. Ben, I'm going to put you on the spot with each of these bills. Let's go to the Ebbink meter, which I just came up with the name for right now. I like it. Give me a percentage chance of each of those bills passing. So the No Robo Bosses Act.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (15:22)

Passing or being signed by the governor? Just to clarify. Because lots of stuff passes.

Rich Meneghello (15:25)

Ugh. Okay, well, passes and then, give me percent passes, percent governor signs.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (15:32)

All right, so the No Robo Bosses, I'm going to say 90% pass. It passed last year. Whether the governor signs, I'm going to say 40%. It was a pretty strong veto message last year. We talked about he's running for president. He's sort of been chummy chummy with Silicon Valley and the high tech industry on AI so far. If the bill doesn't dramatically respond to the concerns he raised in the veto message and they're just going to make another run at it, I'm going to put that at a pretty low, like a 40% chance.

Rich Meneghello (16:07)

AI layoff notices bill. What do you got there?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (16:11)

I think that'll pass. I think, all right, 90% pass. I would say 75% sign. I think they're gonna make some changes to make it more conform to California's WARN Act. And if they do that, then I think it has a pretty good likelihood of getting signed. We see all these stories in the newspapers, layoffs, layoffs, layoffs. I think the governors wanna show "the least I can do is some type of advanced written notice requirement."

Rich Meneghello (16:40)

And then the AI tools notification: passage chance, governor sign chance.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (16:45)

Passage, I'm going to say 75%, sign 50%. Again, his veto message of the No Robo Bosses bill last year, he really called out the notices and he said, you know, this is too broad. You're going to be sending notices all the time that have no meaning, people ignore. So I think if this bill falls into that same trap, I think it's got a pretty good chance of being vetoed.

Rich Meneghello (17:07)

Ben, when I was a brand-new baby lawyer, a client asked me once to give them the estimate of chances of success on a motion, and I said 50%, and they yelled at me and said, a lawyer should never say 50%.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (17:20)

Well, I'll just say it depends.

Rich Meneghello (17:22)

Aww, even worse. That is even worse. Okay.

This is the FP5. I'm Rich Meneghello. And once again, I'm here with Ben Ebbink, the co-chair of our Government Relations Practice Group and California insiders' insider. For a list of all the bills that we're talking about today and all of the other California workplace bills that Ben thinks are important enough to track, check out the insight linked in our show notes and you can read all about them.

All right, so the third thing we're gonna talk about today. Lawmakers are looking to make certain kinds of workplace surveillance like monitoring software and tracking tools and data collection a potential liability of \$500 per employee per violation. Ben, tell us about this bill and whether it's as scary as I just made it out to be.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (18:19)

It's AB 1883. This is a sort pared-down version of a similar bill last year. This is very big for labor. They talk a lot about workplace surveillance, right? They think everybody's being watched in the workplace. They tell stories about two employees are in front of the water cooler and they say something about the union or something and then they're terminated because there was a secret camera recording their conversation. So that's kind of where this bill is coming from.

And I would say on his face, they probably argue it sounds pretty reasonable. You can't use workplace surveillance to surveil employees engaged in protected activity. You can't use things like gait recognition technology or facial recognition technology other than for security reasons. You can't use technology that infers protected category of employees. And I think at some level, all of those things sound reasonable. Like, yeah, why would you be using workplace surveillance to do that kind of thing?

I think when you start thinking about the practical effect of this and really take a deep dive, there are lots of uses of technology for not nefarious reasons: to monitor employees for safety, productivity on how you design your assembly floor, you may want to take into account gait technology and how many steps it takes workers.

So I think this is an example of just an over broad bill that sounds good at first blush. But when you start thinking about how am I going to implement this? OK, it's fine to say you can't have workplace surveillance that monitors employees engaging in protected activity. But you've got a camera that monitors your facility. Two employees decide to start talking about work conditions or other protected activity. How do you know that's going to come up? Are you going to turn that off? How are you going to turn off the video camera that monitors the facility? So I just think that practical implementation of this is going to be pretty difficult.

Rich Meneghello (20:24)

Okay. Let me call upon the Ebbink meter once again, Ben. What are the chances of success of this bill passing and being signed by the governor?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (20:33)

I'm going to put this at 60% chance of passing just because the bill last year didn't even make it to the governor's desk. And then in terms of being signed, I would say slightly lower. I would say 40%. I just think this one, again, if they don't really address some of the unintended consequences or legitimate uses here, I think this is going to have a hard time getting the governor's signature.

Rich Meneghello (20:59)

Yeah, makes sense. That brings us to our fourth thing. Ben, California wants to make menopause a protected category under workplace discrimination law. And before our audience thinks this is just a niche issue that they don't need to track, know that 20 million American women are going through this right now. So Ben, tell us about this menopause protection bill.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (21:28)

This one is interesting and California is not the only state looking at this. Other states have been looking at this issue as well. This one has a little bit of an interesting political backstory too here in California.

So last year there were two bills dealing with insurance coverage of menopause and menopause-related conditions. And I think the governor vetoed both of those bills and he got some celebrity flak for doing that. So I think Halle Berry came out on social media and blasted the governor and made a big thing about it. So definitely a lot of attention on this issue in California and I think this bill is somewhat in the vein of, "let's put it right back on the governor's desk. Let's hold his feet to the fire a little bit."

So this is a little bit different. It's not on insurance coverage, but it would amend the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, which is our employment discrimination law, to basically include menopause and related conditions as protected categories under sex. So an actual protected category, meaning there could not be discrimination in terms and conditions of employment or employment decisions and potentially have to make reasonable accommodations to individual employees going through menopause.

Rich Meneghello (22:40)

What's the business case for employers? I'm to ask you to put down your legislative analyst hat and put your lawyer hat on. What's the business case for getting ahead of this issue, even if this bill doesn't pass in California this year?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (22:54)

Well, I think especially where it's an environment where it's difficult to recruit employees, employers are trying to go out of their way to show that they're compassionate, they care about their employees, they understand what employees are going through. We're seeing a lot of states mandate bereavement leave, but you had employers who had very generous bereavement leave policies well before those laws came about, and even in states that don't mandate that, because they think it's important and a compassionate thing to do for their employees. So I do think you'll see some pressure and movement on employers, regardless of whether this bill passes or not, just based on the fact that, half your workforce is going to go through this process at some point in your life. And if you want to be responsible to them, compassionate to them, you know, probably suits you to have some policy in place where you take that into consideration.

Rich Meneghello (23:49)

Sure. Let's call upon that Ebbink meter once again. Ben, what are the percentage chances of the menopause protection bill passing and getting signed by the governor?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (23:59)

I think it's got a pretty good shot at passing. I would say 75, 80% shot of passing. Now, I don't know if it's gonna be in its current form, which is a protected category, or it's gonna morph into a more just reasonable accommodation. Regardless of that, I think pretty good shot. If it does pass, I'm gonna put this at 100% because like Gavin Newsom, running for president, already got flack from high profile celebrities for not caring about this issue, the last thing he's going to want to do is alienate female voters the year before he's running for president. So I think if it gets to his desk, the pressure is going to be on and it's almost guaranteed he's going to sign this thing into law.

Rich Meneghello (24:39)

Whoa, wait, you said 100% and now you said almost guaranteed. What is it Ben? 100% or lower than 100%?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (24:46)

Well, I was trying to say there was a chance, but OK, no chance, 100%.

Rich Meneghello (24:49)

100%, the Ben Ebbink guarantee, ladies and gentlemen. You heard it here first.

Okay, and then the fifth and final thing that employers need to know about California's 2026 legislative session when it comes to workplace law is something about California's Ban the Box law.

So the state law already limits when employers can ask about an applicant's criminal history, but there's a new bill out there that would require a specific documented process before an employer can reject someone because of a conviction. So first, just generally, Ben, I've heard this occasionally that some employers out there aren't familiar with the term, quote, Ban the Box. What does a Ban the Box law mean?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (25:35)

Yeah, so we've had this in California at the statewide level for quite some time and even longer, in fact, at the local level, several local jurisdictions. So this has to do with when in the hiring process you as an employer are able to review conviction history information about an applicant. And so what Ban the Box says in general is that you're not allowed to look at conviction history about an applicant until after you've made a conditional offer of employment. You don't get to run the background check. You don't get to review the conviction history until after you've evaluated them on their qualifications, made a conditional offer of employment. You make it conditional on the fact that you're going to look at their conviction history. Then you do. If you determine that that conviction history causes you to revisit the decision, there's a process where you have to perform an individualized assessment, notify the applicant you're going to rescind the offer, give them an opportunity to respond if they think something is incorrect. So that's in essence what we've had in California for quite some time.

Rich Meneghello (26:41)

Okay, and so the phrase, Ban the Box, means the box that you had on an old application where...

Benjamin M. Ebbink (26:48)

Literally the box on your old application that says, you ever been convicted of a felony or something like that? That box is no longer on there.

Rich Meneghello (26:57)

I think that's some of the confusion sometimes for employers. They know generally what, that they can't ask about this, but they're unfamiliar with the phrase. Maybe it's because people, Ben, at a certain age don't remember what a physical application looked like with, they had to fill out with a pen. I don't know?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (27:12)

Yeah, I'm thinking of my teenagers and they've applied for many, many jobs. I bet they've never applied to a job using a paper application, everything's online or through an app nowadays.

Rich Meneghello (27:24)

All right. Tell us about what this new bill then that you're tracking would do. How would it change Ban the Box in California?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (27:31)

This bill is about, it's about the third year in a row we've seen some proposal to sort of fundamentally change the whole Ban the Box process. So this is AB 2095. And it does a few things that I think are going to be problematic from the employer community. And this isn't a value judgment on Ban the Box or whether we should give people second chances. I think this is just an understanding of what this will do to the process for employers, you know, of hiring individuals.

So number one, really, it's going to shift the burden on employers to a very upfront approach. As I discussed, under Ban the Box at the very beginning of the process, you as the employer have to explain the job duties for a position and identify those job duties for which there will be a conflict if there's a conviction history. So it's moving all of that analysis way up front to the very beginning of the process, which again, regardless of whether you think that's a good or bad thing, that's just gonna be an administrative burden on employers to have to do all that work up front for every position that they're hiring for.

Secondly, this bill extends Ban the Box to even internal promotions, transfers and things like that. So employers obviously have to comply with Ban the Box at the initial hiring, but this potentially would extend to even if you're promoting someone from within, when you've already gone through this whole process. So that's just going to add more time and complexity even to making internal promotions. And I think some would argue, "What's the point? We've already gone through this analysis before."

And then third, which is an interesting feature of this bill, it creates a presumption that if an individual has completed their sentence for a conviction, not including probation or parole, but if they've committed their sentence or incarceration, there's a presumption that that conviction is not related to any job duties they might perform. And so on one hand, that probably sounds reasonable, right? Like, we're all about second chances. Look, you've served your time. But I think when you start thinking about some of the practicalities of that, an explicit, across-the-board presumption, I don't think probably takes into account some crimes and their proximity to somebody applying for a job. If you've been convicted of something that's very, very related and relevant to the position you're going to be performing, if you're handling cash or other financial information and this is an embezzlement conviction, yeah, you may have served your time, maybe it was a year in jail or on parole. But if that was six months ago, a year ago, and now you're applying for a position where the job duties involve access to that kind of information. I don't know that I would argue that can always across the board categorically be a situation where just because the sentence has been completed that there's no relationship. Now, of course, they're going to say it's just a presumption and you can rebut it. And then you can show why that presumption should be

overcome. Again, that's just building in more burden and time in the process, which I think is going to be a little problematic for employers.

Rich Meneghello (31:01)

All right, let's take a look at the Ebbink meter for this final bill we're looking at today, Ben. What are the chances of passage for this Ban the Box broadening?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (31:09)

So I'm going to put this low, just because like I said, there have been two legislative attempts in previous years, none of which even got out of policy committee. So I'm going to put this pretty low at 30%. But I don't think the conversation is going away. I think this issue is going to keep coming back. There are definitely people pushing and saying, we need to do more. We need to give more opportunities, more second chances to individuals.

Even though I don't think this bill is going to advance, I think the conversation is going to be around. And then I put it pretty low. Even if it does pass, I think the governor is going to be a little cautious in this space. So I would similarly put the signing rate at about 30%.

Rich Meneghello (31:54)

Gotcha, okay. Well, Ben, thanks for being on the show, but before we let you go, we do this thing each episode in honor of our five things. We want to ask you five things so the audience can get to know you a little bit better. Are you ready for them?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (32:12)

I'm ready but you didn't warn me so I'm a little scared to.

Rich Meneghello (32:14)

Well, you're gonna do fine. These are easy questions. This isn't trivia, this is all about Ben. Okay, first one. What's your favorite month of the year and why?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (32:23)

My favorite month of the year is November. I like the time of the year. It really feels like fall in November. You have the anticipation of the holidays coming up, but you're not too into the craziness. I think Thanksgiving's my favorite holiday, but you're not in full crazy holiday mode.

Rich Meneghello (32:41)

November, November it is. Okay, fine. I would go September, but maybe that's because I live in the Pacific Northwest and that's where it feels more fall like then, but okay. Question two, Ben, what's the latest movie that you've seen?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (32:52)

I couldn't even tell you. I have a bunch of kids, so it's something that we watched on Netflix as a family. Honestly, I can't even remember the title. It's some animated film that my kids were watching, I lost control of my remote control.

Rich Meneghello (33:04)

Your kids will be glad to know that you're paying such good attention to what they're consuming, great work.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (33:13)

I'm usually reading a book while they're watching.

Rich Meneghello (33:15)

Okay, sure. I'll give the recommendation to the people. I saw Project Hail Mary last, a couple weeks ago. It was good. I appreciate it.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (33:21)

It's on my list, and I think we're going to see it as a family.

Rich Meneghello (33:25)

Yes, go to the theater. Third, sweet or savory?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (33:28)

Definitely savory. I do like an occasional sweet, but I do not have a sweet tooth like my wife has a insane sweet tooth. So I'm definitely more of a savory.

Rich Meneghello (33:37)

All of that sounds very familiar. Four: early bird or night owl?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (33:41)

Early bird, little secret, if you want to reach me at the office, call me at 6:30 because I'm usually in the office by 6:30. I'm just super productive in the morning and those first golden hours when the phone's not ringing off the hook, I'm so productive and get so much done. So I wake up every morning at 5, 5:30, get in the office by 6:30.

Rich Meneghello (34:01)

So then I would say to our audience that phone number is 916-210 <redacted>.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:08)

Sure, let's go with that.

Rich Meneghello (34:10)

Okay, good. Anyone want to call Ben at 6:30 in the morning ...

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:12)

You gave the wrong number anyway. <redacted> is my direct line.

Rich Meneghello (34:17)

That's great. And finally, fifth question, Ben, here's a here's a curveball. Is a hot dog a sandwich, yes or no?

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:24)

No, it's a hot dog. It's its own species. Distinct from a sandwich.

Rich Meneghello (34:29)
It's meat in between bread.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:31)
There's lots of things that are meat in between bread that I wouldn't call a sandwich.

Rich Meneghello (34:35)
So a hamburger, not a sandwich.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:37)
No. Calzone, not a sandwich.

Rich Meneghello (34:39)
Okay. Well, Ben, thank you. Those are all good things to get to know you better. And the audience now not only knows you better, but knows how to reach you. So thank you. All right. Well, that's all the time we have for this week's episode. Once again, joining me, Ben Ebbink. Ben, it was a pleasure having you as a guest. Thanks so much, sir.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (34:58)
Yeah, thanks for having me. And remember, everyone, if you want to find out what's coming into your state in three years, pay attention to what California is doing in 2026.

Rich Meneghello (35:05)
It's like a crystal ball.

Benjamin M. Ebbink (35:06)
That's right.

Rich Meneghello (35:09)
And as always, thanks so much for listening to the FP5. For a full list of all the top California workplace bills that we're watching for 2026, check out the written insight that's linked in our show notes.

If you enjoyed the show, make sure you're subscribed and rate us on your favorite podcast app. We'll see you next week.

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