



Employer Cheat Sheet for Workplace Laws Taking Effect January 1, 2026: Top 5 Trends and Your Quick List of 50+ New Laws

Insights

12.11.25

Workplace law compliance was a wild ride in 2025, and now it's time to catch our breath and prepare for what's next. More than 50 new workplace laws will kick in on January 1 in more than half the states across the country, and several "Big Beautiful Bill" provisions taking effect in 2026 will impact employers nationwide. We'll cover the top five trends and give you a quick list of all the new laws rolling out at the turn of the year.

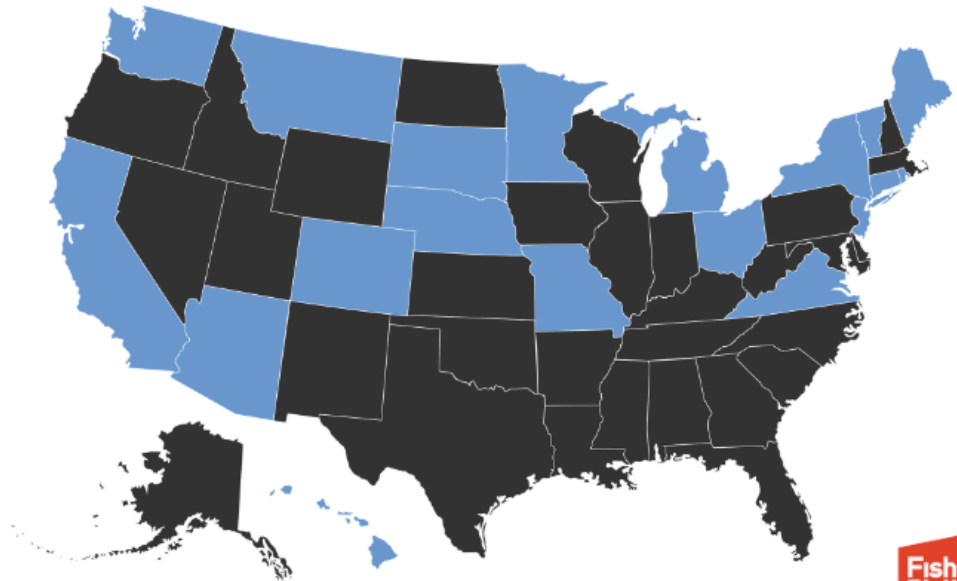
Top 5 Trends Among New State Laws Effective January 1, 2026

1. Minimum Wage Increases

At least 19 states will see minimum wage hikes on January 1, and statewide rates will hit or exceed \$15 per hour **for the first time** in Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Missouri, and Nebraska. Check out our [Minimum Wage Map](#) and our "Quick List" below to learn more.

- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Hawaii
- Maine
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- New Jersey
- New York
- Ohio
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington

Statewide Minimum Wage Increases EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026



Remember to also check whether any higher rates are required at your local level or whether special rules apply (such as different rates for tipped employees or higher rates for workers in certain industries).

2. New Paid Leave Requirements

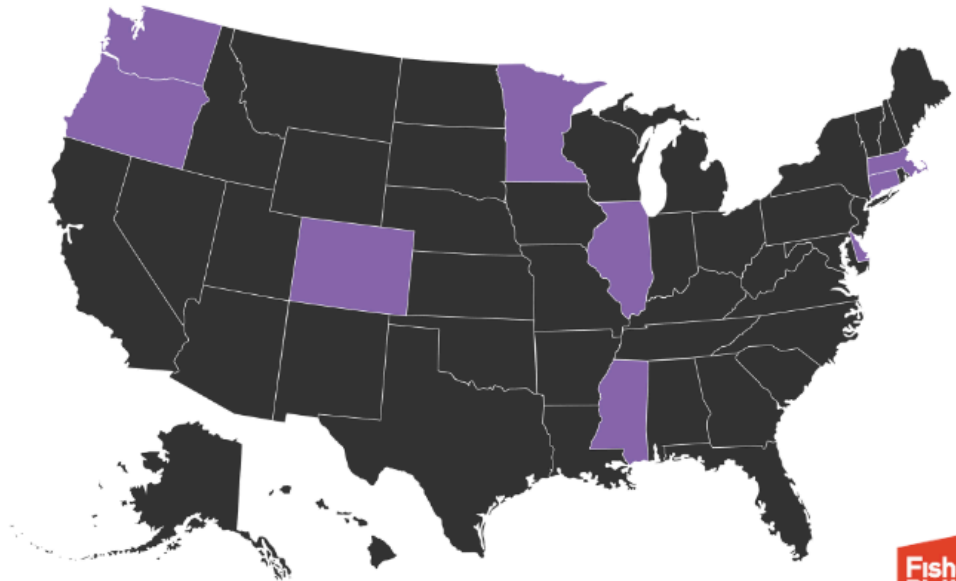
Over the past few years, we've seen a sharp increase in state-level legislation and ballot initiatives with strong voter support mandating employer-provided leave options for employees. A whole new batch of various types of leave laws will roll out on January 1, including:

- Minnesota's new Paid Leave program will launch
- Paid family and medical leave (PFML) benefits will begin under Delaware's program (payroll contributions started in 2025)
- Significant expansions to Washington's PFML law will take effect
- Colorado will require additional paid FAMLI leave time if an employee's newborn child requires care in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Several other states will implement new or expanded rules regarding sick, safe, and various other types of leave. Check out our "Quick List" below to learn more.

Paid Leave Requirements

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026

- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Illinois
- Massachusetts
- Minnesota
- Mississippi
- Oregon
- Washington



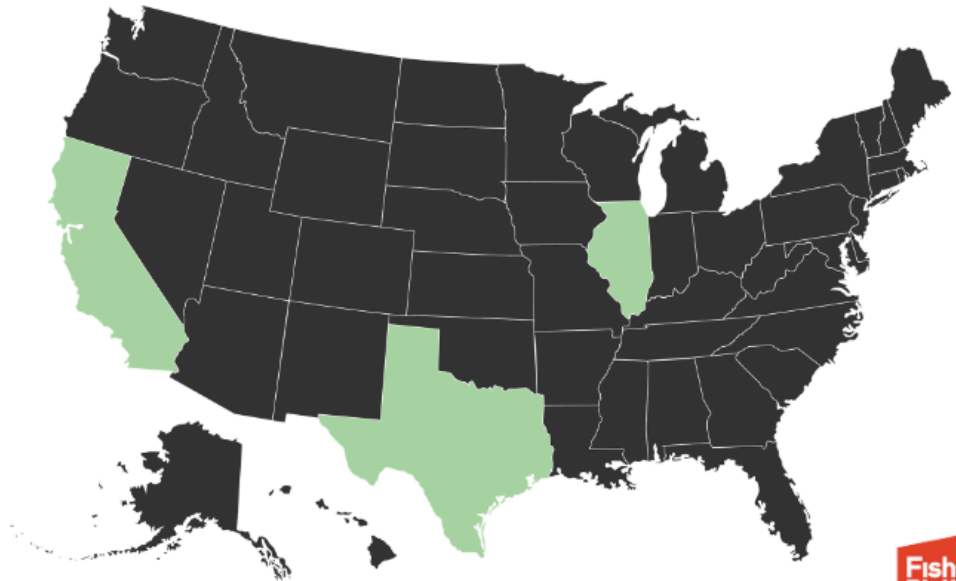
3. Artificial Intelligence Guardrails + More Data Protection Rules

Updates to the Illinois Human Rights Act will prohibit employers from using AI in ways that result in workplace discrimination and require them to provide notice when AI is used for certain employment-related purposes. Texas will also begin regulating AI in the workplace – though with a softer regulatory approach. In addition, California will roll out the nation's first comprehensive attempt to require safety and transparency reporting for the most powerful AI systems. (State regulators also passed a sweeping set of ADMT regulations this past year, but they aren't set to take effect until January 1, 2027 – so you have some more time to prepare.)

Artificial Intelligence Guardrails

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026

- California
- Illinois
- Texas



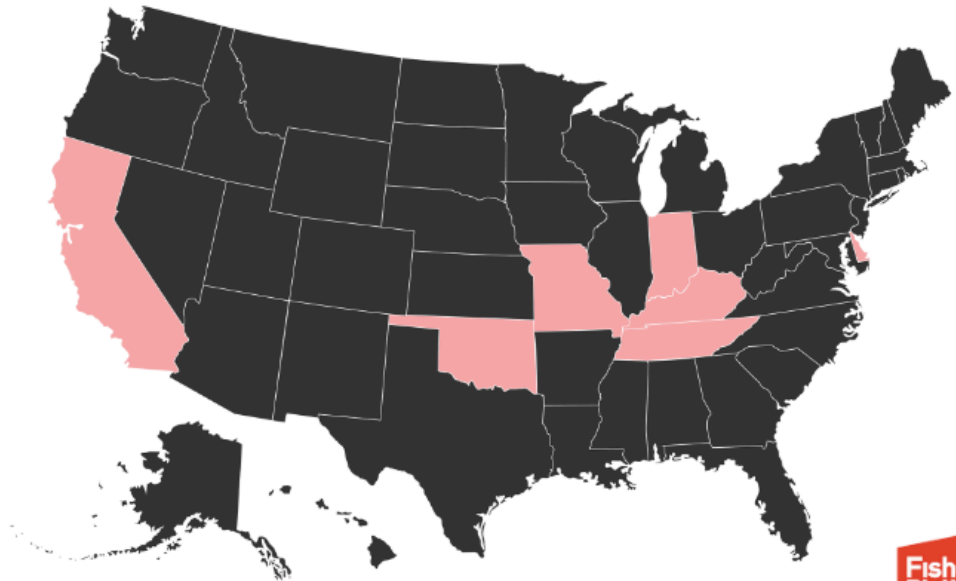
The rise of new state privacy laws in recent years have expanded consumer rights, imposed stricter data governance obligations, and created a complex compliance environment for businesses operating across state lines. Starting in January, several states will impose new obligations for covered businesses, such as California's new strict timeframe for providing data breach notifications and required universal opt-out mechanisms in Delaware and Tennessee.

Data Protection Requirements

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026

- California
- Delaware*
- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Missouri
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee*

*Deadline for implementing certain universal opt-out mechanisms



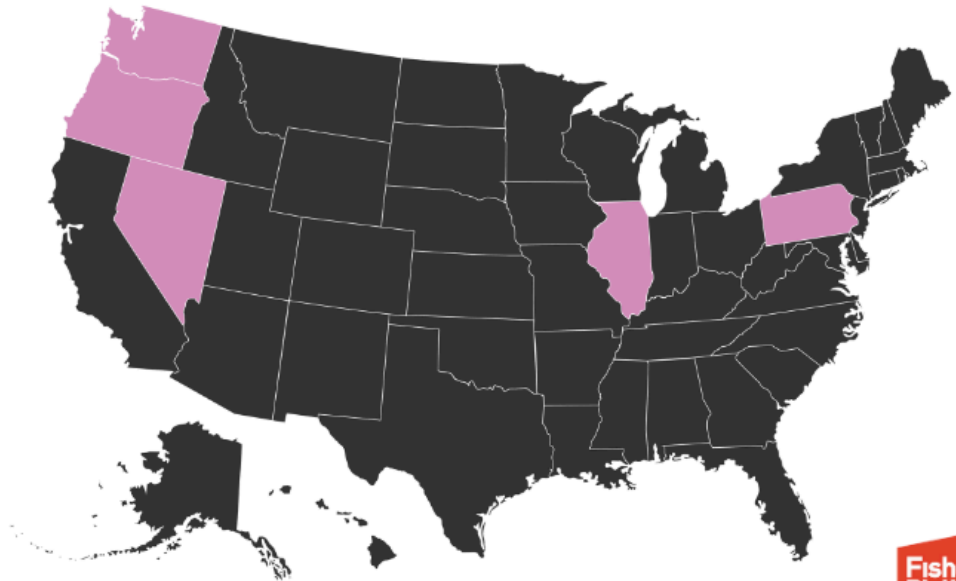
4. Stricter Workplace Safety Standards

Certain employers in Nevada will soon need to monitor air quality and reduce employees' exposure to wildfire smoke. Oregon will roll out workplace violence prevention requirements for certain healthcare entities, and Washington will expand safety standards for isolated employees (such as janitors, security guards, and room service attendants).

Workplace Safety Rules

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026

- Illinois
- Nevada
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Washington



5. State-Level Labor Protections

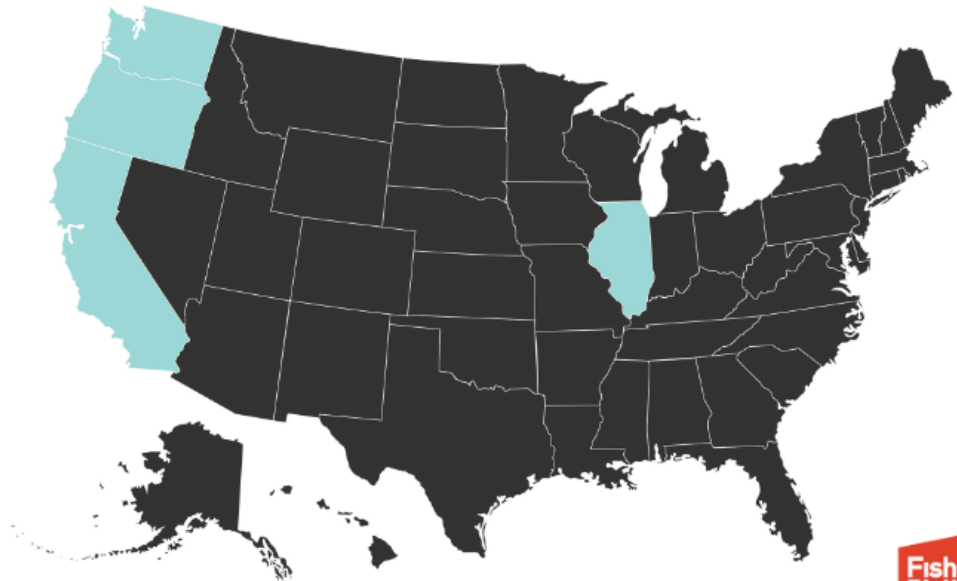
As more states consider boosting labor rights in response to perceived gaps at the federal level, the National Labor Relations Board is pushing back. For example, the NLRB is suing California over its new law that's set to authorize the state to decide certain unfair labor practice cases in the private sector beginning January 1.

Separately, Oregon and Washington will soon allow striking employees to qualify for unemployment compensation benefits – joining a small but growing list of states to do so.

Labor-Related Protections

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026

- California
- Illinois
- Oregon
- Washington



Quick List of 50+ New Workplace Laws Taking Effect January 1, 2026

Note: This list should not be relied upon as a comprehensive source for any and all new laws taking effect across the country. This list generally does not cover local laws. All laws listed take effect January 1, 2026, unless otherwise noted.

Check with your FP attorney to determine whether the jurisdictions in which you operate have additional workplace law changes set to take effect in 2026.

Federal

- **Several Benefits-Related Provisions Under the Big Beautiful Bill** ([FP insight](#))
- **Several Big Beautiful Bill Provisions Impacting Non-Profit Employers** ([FP insight](#))

Alabama

- **Portable Benefits for Independent Contractors (*Dec. 31, 2025*)** ([FP Insight](#))

Arizona

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

California

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))
- **Large AI Transparency Law for Frontier Models** ([FP insight](#))
- **Immigration-Related Rights Notices + Emergency Contacts** ([FP insight](#))
- **30-Day Window to Provide Data Breach Notifications** ([FP insight](#))
- **State Power Over Private-Sector Labor Disputes** ([FP insight](#))
- **Ban on “Stay-or-Pay” Provisions** ([FP insight](#))
- **Updates to Job Posting Requirements and the Equal Pay Act** ([FP insight](#))
- **Mandatory Penalties for Pay Data Reporting Failures** ([FP insight](#) – see #8)
- **Pandemic-Related Recall Rights Extended Again** ([FP insight](#))
- **Cal-WARN Notice Changes** ([FP insight](#))
- **New Risks for Unsatisfied Wage Judgments** ([FP insight](#))
- **Broader Requirements for Personnel Records Production** ([FP insight](#))

Colorado

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **FAMLI Program: Lower Premiums + Extra Paid Leave for NICU Parents** ([FP insight](#))

Connecticut

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **Paid Sick Leave Requirements Extend to Smaller Employers** ([FP insight](#))

Delaware

- **Paid Family and Medical Leave Program Begins** ([FP insight](#))
- **Deadline for Implementing Universal Opt-Out Mechanisms** ([FP insight](#))

District of Columbia

- **New Paystub Transparency Requirements** ([Amendment to B25-265](#) – *under Congressional review*)

Hawaii

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

Illinois

- **Regulation of AI Use for Employment-Related Purposes** ([FP insight](#))
- **IHRA Updates: New Penalty, No More Mandated Conferences** ([FP insight](#))
- **Mandated Group Health Insurance Coverage of Dependent Parents (applies to policies issued, amended, delivered, or renewed after January 1, 2026)** ([FP insight](#))
- **Updates to the Nursing Mothers in the Workplace Act** ([SB 212](#))
- **Updates to the Work Transparency Act** ([HB 3638](#))
- **Updates to the Employee Blood and Organ Donation Leave Act** ([HB 1616](#))
- **Updates to the Human Trafficking Recognition Training Act** ([SB 1422](#))
- **Updates to the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act** ([HB 1278](#))
- **Updates to the Food Handling Regulation Enforcement Act** ([SB 1288](#))
- **Updates to the Transportation Benefits Program Act** ([HB 3094](#))

Indiana

- **New Consumer Data Protection Law** ([SB 5](#))
- **New Earned Wage Access Services Law** ([HB 1125](#))

Iowa

- **Updates to Unemployment Insurance Taxes on Employer** ([SF 607](#))

Kentucky

- **New Kentucky Consumer Data Protection Act** ([FP insight](#))

Maine

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))

Local Spotlight

- **City of Portland Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))

Massachusetts

- **Updates to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Program** ([FP insight](#))

Michigan

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))

Minnesota

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **New Paid Leave Program** ([FP insight](#))
- **Expanded Meal and Rest Break Laws** ([Minnesota DOLI website](#))
- **Updates to Earned Safe and Sick Time Law** ([SF 17](#))

Mississippi

- **New Mississippi State Employees Paid Parental Leave Act** ([HB 1063](#))

Missouri

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))
- **Data Breach Notice Law for Insurers** ([FP insight](#))

Montana

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **Expanded Ban on Healthcare Non-Competes** ([HB 620](#))

Nebraska

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **New Workplace Safety Rules on Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke** ([FP insight](#))
- **Limits on Healthcare Providers' FMLA Certification Fees** ([FP insight](#))

New Hampshire

- **Limited Unpaid Parental Leave** ([FP insight](#))
- **Military Spouse Leave** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)
- **Broader Rules for Voluntary Hiring Preferences for Military-Related Applicants** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)

New Jersey

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

New York

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **Major Overhaul of Healthy Terminals Act** ([FP insight](#))

North Carolina

- **Defining “Sex” for Purposes of All State Rules, Regulations, and Policies** ([HB 805](#))

Ohio

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

Oklahoma

- **Updates to Security Breach Notification Act** ([SB 626](#))

Oregon

- **Unemployment Compensation for Striking Workers** ([FP insight](#))
- **New Payroll Practices Transparency Requirements** ([FP insight](#))
- **Paid Time Off for Employees to Donate Blood** ([SB 1108](#))
- **Updates to Workplace Violence Prevention Rules for Healthcare Employers** ([SB 537](#) + [Oregon OSHA website](#))
- **Restrictions on Per-Visit Compensation for Home Health Care Entities** ([SB 1168](#))

Pennsylvania

- **New Weapon Notification Law for Private Schools** (*effective Jan. 6*) ([FP insight](#))
- **New CROWN Act Bans Discrimination Based on Hairstyles** (*effective Jan. 24*) ([FP insight](#))

Local Spotlight

- **City of Philadelphia – Updates to Ban-the-Box Rules** (*effective Jan. 6*) ([FP insight](#))
- **City of Pittsburgh – Enhanced Paid Sick Leave Rules** ([FP insight](#))

Rhode Island

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP insight](#))
- **New Onboarding Notice Requirements** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)

South Dakota

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

Tennessee

- **Deadline for Implementing Universal Opt-Out Mechanisms** ([FP insight](#))

Texas

- **New Texas Responsible Artificial Intelligence Governance Act** ([FP insight](#))

Vermont

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

Virginia

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))

Washington

- **Statewide Minimum Wage Increase** ([FP Minimum Wage Map](#))
- **Major Updates to PFML Program** ([FP insight](#))
- **Protected Leave for Victims of Hate Crimes** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)
- **Ramped Up Enforcement of Prevailing Wage Law** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)
- **Updated Safety Standards for Isolated Employees** ([FP insight](#) – same link as above)
- **Unemployment Compensation for Striking and Locked-Out Workers** ([FP insight](#))

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments related to all aspects of workplace law. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney.

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Lauren Laing
Legal Content Counsel
412.822.6623
[Email](#)



Braden Lawes
Senior Government Affairs Analyst
202.916.7176
[Email](#)

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