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William Hamilton, President & Eastern PA Legislative Coordinator – Tim O'Neill, Consultant – Dan Grace, Trustee & Legislative Advisor – Robert Baptiste, Esq. Legal Advisor – Thomas Felice, Staff

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

More Than 60,000 Pa. Workers Expected To See Pay Increase With New Overtime Rule

December 31, 2019

HARRISBURG (KDKA) – More than 60,000 Pennsylvania residents are expected to see a pay increase in 2020 as a new federal overtime rule goes into effect.

The rule taking effect Wednesday guarantees time-and-a-half pay to nearly all hourly employees who work more than 40 hours a week and salaried workers making less than about \$35,500 per year.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry Jerry Oleksiak tells the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review the rule should benefit about 61,000 people in the state.

The minimum wage remains \$7.25 an hour in Pennsylvania. That's the same it's been since 2009.

PA Turnpike tolls go up 6% in 2020, but smaller increases expected beginning in 2023

ED BLAZINA

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette December 31, 2019

Pennsylvania Turnpike users can expect 6% toll increases in 2020 and 2021 but then — if the state Legislature follows through with plans to change how the state funds public transit — the rate of annual increases gradually will go down to 3% in 2028.

Nikolaus Grieshaber, the turnpike's chief financial officer, outlined the agency's financial future recently in an interview with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette about the 6% toll hike that begins Jan. 5. The increase marks the 12th year in a row that rates have gone up and will increase the fee for a car traveling the length of the state to \$61.80 from the current

\$58.30 for cash customers, and to \$44.20 from \$41.70 for E-ZPass users who several times had smaller increases to boost the use of the prepaid cards.

Mr. Grieshaber said the agency needs the rate hikes the next two years to cover the cost of debt service, which is about \$750 million a year. That's more than half of the turnpike's annual revenue of about \$1.4 billion. "More than half of our revenue is going into debt service," he said. "We have a lot of debt to pay down."

A major reason for the growing debt has been the turnpike's obligation to pay \$450 million a year to the state Department of Transportation to help pay for public transit. It borrows most of that money every year because it doesn't have the cash on hand to pay it. That began in 2007 when the Legislature passed a bill pushed by former Gov. Ed Rendell requiring the turnpike to pay \$900 million a year to PennDOT, money that was supposed to come from collecting tolls on Interstate 80. Federal officials nixed the tolls, but instead of eliminating the turnpike payments they were cut to \$450 million annually through 2022, even though the agency no longer had a source for the funds.

The amount is scheduled to be reduced to \$50 million in 2023, but that is contingent on the Legislature finding another source for the funds. The turnpike has been pushing unsuccessfully for several years to eliminate that payment before 2022, but legislative Republicans and Democrats say they expect to pass laws in 2020 changing the funding formula after 2022.

If those payments aren't substantially reduced, it would be "catastrophic" for the turnpike, Mr. Grieshaber said. The agency would have to continue toll increases of at least 6%, he said, but he agreed with the concern expressed repeatedly by state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale that motorists will begin to avoid the toll road if rate hikes continue.

"There's been a lot of talk (about changing the funding formula)," turnpike spokesman Carl DeFebo said. "We're more hopeful than we've been before that it will happen." If that does happen, the amount of the turnpike's annual toll hikes would begin to come down, Mr. Grieshaber said, beginning in 2023. The schedule calls for the rate of increase to fall to 3% in 2028. "The rate of increase will start to decline," he said. "There will still be annual increases, but they won't be as high." After that, the increase may stay at 3% for many years to account for inflation, Mr. Grieshaber said.

>>>>TEAMSTERS BEWARE<<<<

Jeep Cherokee watching: Pa. to start automated speed enforcement in work zones

ED BLAZINAPittsburgh Post-Gazette December 31, 2019

After years of concern about the number of traffic accidents that occur in road construction zones, Pennsylvania is doing something about it. Beginning Jan. 4, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Pennsylvania Turnpike will begin a 60-day pilot program to formally test what's called the Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement program. The program is designed to cause drivers to slow down in construction areas by setting up speed monitoring equipment in work areas.

After the pilot program is finished, the two state agencies expect to deploy private contractors in white Jeep Cherokee SUVs at various sites throughout the state to monitor speed beginning March 4. If the monitors detect someone going more than 11 miles an hour over the speed limit, the motorist will receive a notice by mail with a warning for the first violation, followed by a \$75 fine for a second offense and \$150 for each future ticket. The incidents will be treated as

civil violations and no points will be added to a driver's license.

"From our standpoint, we aren't trying to make this an 'I got you' situation," said Dan Farley, chief of transportation systems management and operations for PennDOT. "We're trying to address the egregious. The concern is obvious in accident statistics: In 2018, there were 2,804 accidents in work zones across Pennsylvania that resulted in 23 fatalities. Forty-three percent of those accidents resulted in injuries. Since 1970, 89 PennDOT workers have died in traffic accidents in work zones and 45 turnpike employees have died since 1945. "The over-arching theme of this program is safety, both for workers and the traveling public," said Mahmood Shehata, a consultant overseeing the program for the state. "Too many people are dying in our work zones."

Here's how the program will work:

Private contractor Redflex Traffic Systems, an Australian company with U.S. headquarters in Arizona, will deploy the Jeep Cherokees across the state based on work zones that are considered the most dangerous. Their deployment will be posted [on a special website](#), and each site will have two 4-foot-square signs to warn drivers they are approaching and entering a zone where speed is being monitored and a photo is being taken of license plates.

The Jeep Cherokees, which look similar to self-driving vehicles with equipment mounted on the roof, monitor speed in two ways. One is similar to the equipment used by state police and the other is

speeding in our work zones." The new program was authorized by the Legislature in 2018, but its history dates back much further. A report in 2012 by the state Transportation Advisory Committee recommended similar steps to control speeding in work zones.

Doppler radar, and the two methods must agree before the operator recommends a driver should receive a violation.

If the operator determines the equipment has been calibrated properly and the license photo is clear, the possible violation is sent to state police. That agency reviews the information again and if it agrees a violation should be issued, it forwards the information to PennDOT to issue the ticket. The law requires a ticket to be issued within 30 days of the incident. The driver then has 30 days to challenge the ticket or pay it. The only defenses for the ticket are if the person receiving the ticket didn't own the vehicles when the violation occurred; the vehicle had been reported stolen; or the monitoring equipment wasn't calibrated properly.

PennDOT will have 10 monitoring vehicles and the turnpike will have seven. Under the law, the vehicles only can be stationed in areas with active road crews, not any area with lane restrictions. "We actually are letting people know where we'll be," said Mr. Shehata. "We definitely want people to be aware of this and know where we are so they slow down."

