

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2011**

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**SENATE BILL 654**

Short Title: WC/Adjust Organ Injury Benefit Annually. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Goolsby, Newton, Daniel; and D. Berger.

Referred to: Judiciary I.

April 20, 2011

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT AMENDING THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE  
ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE BENEFIT FOR PERMANENT INJURY TO AN  
IMPORTANT BODILY ORGAN.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 97-31 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 97-31. Schedule of injuries; rate and period of compensation.**

(a) In cases included by the following schedule the compensation in each case shall be paid for disability during the healing period and in addition the disability shall be deemed to continue for the period specified, and shall be in lieu of all other compensation, including disfigurement, to wit:

- (1) For the loss of a thumb, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 75 weeks.
- (2) For the loss of a first finger, commonly called the index finger, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 45 weeks.
- (3) For the loss of a second finger, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 40 weeks.
- (4) For the loss of a third finger, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 25 weeks.
- (5) For the loss of a fourth finger, commonly called the little finger, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 20 weeks.
- (6) The loss of the first phalange of the thumb or any finger shall be considered to be equal to the loss of one half of such thumb or finger, and the compensation shall be for one half of the periods of time above specified.
- (7) The loss of more than one phalange shall be considered the loss of the entire finger or thumb: Provided, however, that in no case shall the amount received for more than one finger exceed the amount provided in this schedule for the loss of a hand.
- (8) For the loss of a great toe, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 35 weeks.
- (9) For the loss of one of the toes other than a great toe, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 10 weeks.
- (10) The loss of the first phalange of any toe shall be considered to be equal to the loss of one half of such toe, and the compensation shall be for one half of the periods of time above specified.



- 1 (11) The loss of more than one phalange shall be considered as the loss of the  
2 entire toe.
- 3 (12) For the loss of a hand, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
4 average weekly wages during 200 weeks.
- 5 (13) For the loss of an arm, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
6 average weekly wages during 240 weeks.
- 7 (14) For the loss of a foot, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
8 average weekly wages during 144 weeks.
- 9 (15) For the loss of a leg, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
10 average weekly wages during 200 weeks.
- 11 (16) For the loss of an eye, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
12 average weekly wages during 120 weeks.
- 13 (17) The loss of both hands, or both arms, or both feet, or both legs, or both eyes,  
14 or any two thereof, shall constitute total and permanent disability, to be  
15 compensated according to the provisions of G.S. 97-29. The employee shall  
16 have a vested right in a minimum amount of compensation for the total  
17 number of weeks of benefits provided under this section for each member  
18 involved. When an employee dies from any cause other than the injury for  
19 which he is entitled to compensation, payment of the minimum amount of  
20 compensation shall be payable as provided in G.S. 97-37.
- 21 (18) For the complete loss of hearing in one ear, sixty-six and two-thirds percent  
22 (66 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 70 weeks; for the complete  
23 loss of hearing in both ears, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the  
24 average weekly wages during 150 weeks.
- 25 (19) Total loss of use of a member or loss of vision of an eye shall be considered  
26 as equivalent to the loss of such member or eye. The compensation for  
27 partial loss of or for partial loss of use of a member or for partial loss of  
28 vision of an eye or for partial loss of hearing shall be such proportion of the  
29 periods of payment above provided for total loss as such partial loss bears to  
30 total loss, except that in cases where there is eighty-five per centum (85%),  
31 or more, loss of vision in any eye, this shall be deemed "industrial blindness"  
32 and compensated as for total loss of vision of such eye.
- 33 (20) The weekly compensation payments referred to in this section shall all be  
34 subject to the same limitations as to maximum and minimum as set out in  
35 G.S. 97-29.
- 36 (21) In case of serious facial or head disfigurement, the Industrial Commission  
37 shall award proper and equitable compensation not to exceed twenty  
38 thousand dollars (\$20,000). In case of enucleation where an artificial eye  
39 cannot be fitted and used, the Industrial Commission may award  
40 compensation as for serious facial disfigurement.
- 41 (22) In case of serious bodily disfigurement for which no compensation is  
42 payable under any other subdivision of this section, but excluding the  
43 disfigurement resulting from permanent loss or permanent partial loss of use  
44 of any member of the body for which compensation is fixed in the schedule  
45 contained in this section, the Industrial Commission may award proper and  
46 equitable compensation not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).
- 47 (23) For the total loss of use of the back, sixty-six and two-thirds percent (66  
48 2/3%) of the average weekly wages during 300 weeks. The compensation for  
49 partial loss of use of the back shall be such proportion of the periods of  
50 payment herein provided for total loss as such partial loss bears to total loss,  
51 except that in cases where there is seventy-five per centum (75%) or more

1 loss of use of the back, in which event the injured employee shall be deemed  
2 to have suffered "total industrial disability" and compensated as for total loss  
3 of use of the back.

4 (24) In case of the loss of or permanent injury to any important external or  
5 internal organ or part of the body for which no compensation is payable  
6 under any other subdivision of this section, the Industrial Commission may  
7 award proper and equitable compensation not to exceed twenty thousand  
8 dollars (\$20,000).

9 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Article, the benefit allowed pursuant to  
10 subdivision (24) of subsection (a) of this section shall be adjusted July 1 and effective January  
11 1 of each year in the same manner as provided by G.S. 97-29."

12 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to claims  
13 arising on or after that date.