

Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act of 2010

The President recently signed into law the "Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act of 2010" (the 2010 HIRE Act), the centerpiece of which is a payroll tax holiday and up-to-\$1,000 tax credit for businesses that hire unemployed workers. Here's an overview of these new hiring incentives.

To help stimulate the hiring of workers by the private sector, the new law exempts any private-sector employer that hires a worker who had been unemployed for at least 60 days from having to pay the employer's 6.2% share of the Social Security payroll tax on that employee for the remainder of 2010. A company could save a maximum of \$6,621 if it hired an unemployed worker and paid that worker at least \$106,800-the maximum amount of wages subject to Social Security taxes-by the end of the year. As an additional incentive, for any qualifying worker hired under this initiative that the employer keeps on payroll for a continuous 52 weeks, the employer is eligible for an additional non-refundable tax credit of up to \$1,000 after the 52-week threshold is reached, to be taken on their 2011 tax return. In order to be eligible, the employee's pay in the second 26-week period must be at least 80% of the pay in the first 26-week period.

Workers hired after the date of introduction of the legislation (Feb. 3, 2010) are eligible for the payroll tax forgiveness and the retention bonus, but only wages paid after the date of the new law's enactment receive the exemption for payroll taxes.

Here are some additional features of the new hiring incentive:

- The tax benefit of the new incentive is immediate. It puts money into a business' cash flow immediately, since the tax is simply not collected in the first place.
- The tax benefit generally applies only to private-sector employment, including nonprofit organizations-public sector jobs are generally not eligible for either benefit. However, employment by a public higher education institution would qualify.
- There is no minimum weekly number of hours that the new employee must work for the employer to be eligible, and there is no maximum on the dollar amount of payroll taxes per employer that may be forgiven.

- For workers that would otherwise be eligible for the "Work Opportunity Tax Credit," the employer must select one benefit or the other for 2010-no double dipping.
- An employer can't claim the new tax breaks for hiring family members.
- A worker who replaces another employee who performed the same job for the employer is not eligible for the benefit, unless the prior employee left the job voluntarily or for cause.
- For the hiring to qualify, the new hire must sign an affidavit, under penalties of perjury, stating that he or she has not been employed for more than 40 hours during the 60-day period ending on the date the employment begins.
- The incentive is not biased towards either low-wage or high-wage workers. Under the measure, a business saves 6.2% on both a \$40,000 worker and a \$90,000 worker.
- The payroll tax holiday does not apply with respect to wages paid during the first calendar quarter of 2010, but the amount by which the Social Security payroll tax would have been reduced under the payroll tax holiday provision during the first calendar quarter is applied against the tax imposed on the employer for the second calendar quarter of 2010.
- The Act creates a similar new set of rules permitting a payroll tax holiday for railroad retirement tax purposes.
- The credit for retaining qualifying new hires is the lesser of \$1,000 or 6.2% of the wages paid by the taxpayer to the retained worker during the 52-consecutive-week period. Thus, the credit for a retained worker will be \$1,000 if, disregarding rounding, the retained worker's wages during the 52-consecutive-week period exceed \$16,129.03. However, the credit is not available for pay not treated as wages under the Code (e.g., remuneration paid to domestic workers).

I hope this information is helpful. If you would like more details about these provisions or any other aspect of the new law, please do not hesitate to call.