
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 171 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY CALTAGIRONE, DeLUCA, READSHAW, OTTEN AND HILL-
EVANS, JANUARY 28, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, JANUARY 28, 2019

AN ACT

1 Prohibiting enforcement of covenants not to compete in
2 employment agreements.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Freedom to
7 Work Act.

8 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

9 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

10 (1) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in applying
11 its laws and protecting its businesses so they can hire the
12 employees of their choosing.

13 (2) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in lowering
14 the unemployment rate and providing individuals every
15 opportunity to make a living wage and maximize their talents
16 to provide for their family.

17 (3) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in promoting
18 increased wages and benefits for working families.

1 (4) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in promoting
2 innovation, entrepreneurship, business expansion and
3 improving existing business opportunities to attract the best
4 qualified worker for open positions.

5 (5) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in promoting
6 unrestricted trade and mobility of employees in the work
7 force as well as promoting businesses' abilities to seek the
8 best qualified candidates for employment.

9 (6) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in workers
10 with high skill levels to increase their income and benefits.

11 (7) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in attracting
12 major multinational high-tech companies to this Commonwealth
13 who plan to invest billions of dollars and hire tens of
14 thousands of employees in high-paying jobs.

15 (8) The Commonwealth disfavors workers being forced to
16 decide between staying in jobs they are overqualified for or
17 leaving the State for better opportunities.

18 (9) The Commonwealth has a strong interest in providing
19 its residents with the tools needed to stay in Pennsylvania
20 to live, work and raise families.

21 Section 3. Definitions.

22 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
23 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
24 context clearly indicates otherwise:

25 "Covenant not to compete." An agreement between an employer
26 and employee that is designed to impede the ability of the
27 employee to seek employment with another employer.

28 Section 4. Prohibition.

29 Except as provided in section 5, a covenant not to compete is
30 illegal, unenforceable and void as a matter of law. No court may

1 rewrite a covenant not to compete.

2 Section 5. Exceptions.

3 A covenant not to compete that satisfies any of the following
4 shall not be subject to section 4:

5 (1) A covenant not to compete that is reasonable and
6 involves an owner of a business that sells the business or
7 sells the goodwill in the business and that is reasonable.

8 (2) A covenant not to compete that involves a
9 dissolution or disassociation of a partnership or a limited
10 liability company.

11 (3) A covenant not to compete that is reasonable, in
12 effect prior to the effective date of this section and may
13 not be renewed.

14 Section 6. Attorney fees and damages.

15 An employee shall:

16 (1) Receive an award of attorney fees after prevailing
17 in a suit against an employer related to the enforcement of a
18 covenant not to compete.

19 (2) Be entitled to damages, including punitive damages,
20 after prevailing in a suit against an employer related to the
21 enforcement of a covenant not to compete.

22 Section 7. Venue, personal jurisdiction and governing law.

23 A dispute arising out of or related to a covenant not to
24 compete involving a resident of this Commonwealth shall be:

25 (1) Exclusively decided by a State court within this
26 Commonwealth.

27 (2) Governed by the laws of this Commonwealth.

28 Section 8. Effective date.

29 This act shall take effect immediately.