



## June Legislative Update

Effective January 1, 2015, minimum wage was increased to \$9.60. On January 1, 2016, minimum wage will increase to \$10.00. On January 1, 2017, minimum wage will increase to \$11.00.

Last November voters of Massachusetts approved a ballot question regarding paid sick leave. The new law requires all employers to allow their employees (FT, PT, temporary, seasonal, and paid interns) to accumulate and use up to 40 hours of "sick time" per calendar year.

- Employers of 11 or more must offer *paid* sick leave. The regulations include requirements such as written information to employees and allows deviation from certain elements (accrual rate and pay out) if the employer's policies are more generous than the law.
- Employers of less than 11 must offer sick leave but are not required to pay for such leave. It is, however, up to the employers' discretion to offer paid sick leave in this smaller environment.

In addition, the Massachusetts Attorney General announced in May a "safe harbor" provision in regulations for the new Paid Sick Leave statute. The law takes effect on July 1, 2015, and from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2015, the regulation would ensure compliance for any employer with a paid time-off policy in existence as of May 1, 2015 that provides the right to use at least 30 hours of paid time off during 2015 and be "job-protected," as per the law passed by the ballot initiative last year. By January 1 2016, all employers operating under the "safe harbor" provisions must adjust their policy to conform to the new statute.

The Massachusetts legislature got off to a slower-than-usual start this session. Newly elected Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst) and his new leadership team could not come to agreement with the House on Joint Committee Rules. Joint Committees are therefore operating under existing rules.

In this new session the MVMA has reviewed over 40 bills pertinent to veterinary medicine and will monitor their progress.

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Licensure has scheduled a public hearing for H.224, An Act to establish a subsidiary board for veterinary technology. The MVMA has submitted testimony in support of the bill.

The MVMA will continue its support of An Act to promote the care and well-being of livestock, HB731, which will establish a Livestock Care and Standards Board in Massachusetts.

The MVMA will also be supporting several bills protecting the health and safety of animals in cars and abandoned animals in vacant property.

And finally, the MVMA is pursuing the passage of legislation to allow an exemption for veterinarians to stock compounded medications. This bill (HB2061) is not expected to be have a hearing until this fall and the MVMA will provide updates as to this bill's progress.