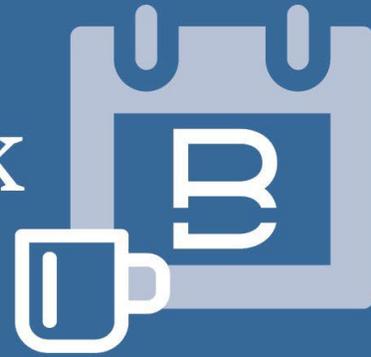


The Work Week

Bassford Remele Employment Practice Group



May 5, 2025

Welcome to another edition of *The Work Week with Bassford Remele*. Each Monday morning, we will publish and send a new article to your inbox to hopefully assist you in jumpstarting your work week.

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State Telework Policy to Take Effect June 1, 2025

[Nicolas L. Hanson](#)

Governor Tim Walz's initiative to require most Minnesota state employees to return to the office for at least 50% of their scheduled workdays is set to begin June 1, 2025. Governor Walz's initiative is an update to the state's current telework policy and has prompted significant legislative, administrative, and labor response. The policy revision allows agency employees to telework up to half (50%) their workdays if their performance is satisfactory and agency needs are met. Employees living more than 50 miles from their primary work location may be eligible for greater telework flexibility, especially if they reside in bordering states or hold hard-to-fill or highly specialized positions, subject to agency and Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) approval. This change replaces the broader pandemic-era telework accommodations and attempts to align with trends in both federal and private sector workplaces, where in-person work requirements are increasing.

Governor Walz's telework initiative aims to revitalize downtown St. Paul, where office vacancies and retail closures have surged post-pandemic. Governor Walz has emphasized that the policy prioritizes organizational cohesion and collaboration while fostering stronger team dynamics and communication, aligning with trends seen in federal agencies and private sector employers like 3M and U.S. Bank. Additionally, Governor Walz has highlighted the need for workforce stability and federal funding as additional objectives of the reworked policy, citing a need to preempt potential federal cutbacks by maintaining a visible and engaged public sector.

However, the initiative has encountered strong opposition from major state employee unions, including the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 5, which together represent nearly 40,000 state workers. Criticisms from these unions center around the governor's alleged unilateral approach, arguing that the decision bypassed collective bargaining and disregarded existing telework agreements. Union leaders have cited both

practical concerns—such as childcare, commuting, and destabilization of workforce routines—and contractual issues as primary concerns, noting that while some telework protections exist in labor contracts, the matter is not subject to formal grievance procedures. The unions are demanding transparency and negotiation, warning of broader labor action.

From a legislative and policy standpoint, the governor’s directive is an executive action implemented through state administrative policy rather than new legislation. The initiative is authorized by the Department of Administration, Enterprise Employee Resources, and the Office of MN.IT Services, with oversight and approval mechanisms provided by MMB for exceptions and specialized cases. Because the initiative operates under executive authority, it bypasses legislative action but intersects with collective bargaining agreements. Unions argue telework protections in existing contracts lack formal grievance mechanisms, prompting threats of litigation. In sum, the policy’s success hinges on balancing downtown economic recovery with employee retention and labor relations.

Minneapolis Bans Discrimination Based on Body Weight, Height, Housing Status and Justice-Impacted Status

The Minneapolis City Council has enacted an amendment to its civil rights ordinance, expressly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of height, weight, housing status, and “justice-impacted status,” which encompasses individuals with prior criminal records, arrests, or probationary histories. This action now puts Minneapolis among Kansas City and Atlanta as the only U.S. cities that recognize and protect against size and status-based discrimination, extending these safeguards to employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. The ordinance mandates individualized assessments for employment decisions involving criminal history rather than blanket exclusions, and provides a formal mechanism for aggrieved individuals to file complaints with the Department of Civil Rights. By passing these protections, the Minneapolis City Council aims to minimize systemic barriers faced by marginalized populations and ensure equitable treatment under the law, reflecting a progressive expansion of civil rights in response to evolving social advocacy and constitutional principles of due process and equal protection. Should the ordinance be signed by Mayor Jacob Frey, who supports it, it would go into effect August 1, 2025.

At Bassford Remele, we actively track emerging and upcoming legislative developments in employment law, with particular attention to workplace policy shifts influenced by recent state and federal regulatory changes. Feel free to reach out if you need assistance in this continually evolving landscape!

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