
Davis-Bacon Act/Copeland “Anti-kickback” Act

Title 40, Subtitle II, Part A, Chapter 31:

SUBCHAPTER IV

§ 3141. Definitions

In this subchapter, the following definitions apply:

- (1) **Federal government.**— The term “Federal Government” has the same meaning that the term “United States” had in the Act of March 3, 1931 (ch. 411, [46 Stat. 1494](#) (known as the Davis-Bacon Act)).¹

- (2) **Wages, scale of wages, wage rates, minimum wages, and prevailing wages.**— The terms “wages”, “scale of wages”, “wage rates”, “minimum wages”, and “prevailing wages” include—
 - (A) the basic hourly rate of pay; and
 - (B) for medical or hospital care, pensions on retirement or death, compensation for injuries or illness resulting from occupational activity, or insurance to provide any of the forgoing, for unemployment benefits, life insurance, disability and sickness insurance, or accident insurance, for vacation and holiday pay, for defraying the costs of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or for other bona fide fringe benefits, but only where the contractor or subcontractor is not required by other federal, state, or local law to provide any of those benefits, the amount of—
 - (i) the rate of contribution irrevocably made by a contractor or subcontractor to a trustee or to a third person under a fund, plan, or program; and
 - (ii) the rate of costs to the contractor or subcontractor that may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits to laborers and mechanics pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program which was communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected.

§ 3142. Rate of wages for laborers and mechanics

- (a) **Application.**— The advertised specifications for every contract in excess of \$2,000, to which the Federal Government or the District of Columbia is a party, for construction, alteration, or repair, including painting and decorating, of public buildings and public works of the Government or the District of Columbia that are located in a State or the District of Columbia and which requires or involves the employment of mechanics or laborers shall contain a provision stating the minimum wages to be paid various classes of laborers and mechanics.

¹ So in original. The period probably should be preceded by an additional closing parenthesis.

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- (b) Based on Prevailing Wage.**— The minimum wages shall be based on the wages the Secretary of Labor determines to be prevailing for the corresponding classes of laborers and mechanics employed on projects of a character similar to the contract work in the civil subdivision of the State in which the work is to be performed, or in the District of Columbia if the work is to be performed there.
- (c) Stipulations Required in Contract.**— Every contract based upon the specifications referred to in subsection (a) must contain stipulations that—
- (1) the contractor or subcontractor shall pay all mechanics and laborers employed directly on the site of the work, unconditionally and at least once a week, and without subsequent deduction or rebate on any account, the full amounts accrued at time of payment, computed at wage rates not less than those stated in the advertised specifications, regardless of any contractual relationship which may be alleged to exist between the contractor or subcontractor and the laborers and mechanics;
 - (2) the contractor will post the scale of wages to be paid in a prominent and easily accessible place at the site of the work; and
 - (3) there may be withheld from the contractor so much of accrued payments as the contracting officer considers necessary to pay to laborers and mechanics employed by the contractor or any subcontractor on the work the difference between the rates of wages required by the contract to be paid laborers and mechanics on the work and the rates of wages received by the laborers and mechanics and not refunded to the contractor or subcontractors or their agents.
- (d) Discharge of Obligation.**— The obligation of a contractor or subcontractor to make payment in accordance with the prevailing wage determinations of the Secretary of Labor, under this subchapter and other laws incorporating this subchapter by reference, may be discharged by making payments in cash, by making contributions described in section [3141 \(2\)\(B\)\(i\)](#) of this title, by assuming an enforceable commitment to bear the costs of a plan or program referred to in section [3141 \(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#) of this title, or by any combination of payment, contribution, and assumption, where the aggregate of the payments, contributions, and costs is not less than the basic hourly rate of pay plus the amount referred to in section [3141 \(2\)\(B\)](#).
- (e) Overtime Pay.**— In determining the overtime pay to which a laborer or mechanic is entitled under any federal law, the regular or basic hourly rate of pay (or other alternative rate on which premium rate of overtime compensation is computed) of the laborer or mechanic is deemed to be the rate computed under section [3141 \(2\)\(A\)](#) of this title, except that where the amount of payments, contributions, or costs incurred with respect to the laborer or mechanic exceeds the applicable prevailing wage, the regular or basic hourly rate of pay (or other alternative rate) is the amount of payments, contributions, or costs actually incurred with respect to the laborer or mechanic minus the greater of the amount of contributions or costs of the types described in section [3141](#)
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[\(2\)\(B\)](#) of this title actually incurred with respect to the laborer or mechanic or the amount determined under section [3141 \(2\)\(B\)](#) but not actually paid.

§ 3143. Termination of work on failure to pay agreed wages

Every contract within the scope of this subchapter shall contain a provision that if the contracting officer finds that any laborer or mechanic employed by the contractor or any subcontractor directly on the site of the work covered by the contract has been or is being paid a rate of wages less than the rate of wages required by the contract to be paid, the Federal Government by written notice to the contractor may terminate the contractor's right to proceed with the work or the part of the work as to which there has been a failure to pay the required wages. The Government may have the work completed, by contract or otherwise, and the contractor and the contractor's sureties shall be liable to the Government for any excess costs the Government incurs.

§ 3144. Authority of Comptroller General to pay wages and list contractors violating contracts

(a) Payment of Wages.—

- (1) **In general.**— The Comptroller General shall pay directly to laborers and mechanics from any accrued payments withheld under the terms of a contract any wages found to be due laborers and mechanics under this subchapter.
- (2) **Right of action.**— If the accrued payments withheld under the terms of the contract are insufficient to reimburse all the laborers and mechanics who have not been paid the wages required under this subchapter, the laborers and mechanics have the same right to bring a civil action and intervene against the contractor and the contractor's sureties as is conferred by law on persons furnishing labor or materials. In those proceedings it is not a defense that the laborers and mechanics accepted or agreed to accept less than the required rate of wages or voluntarily made refunds.

(b) List of Contractors Violating Contracts.—

- (1) **In general.**— The Comptroller General shall distribute to all departments of the Federal Government a list of the names of persons whom the Comptroller General has found to have disregarded their obligations to employees and subcontractors.
- (2) **Restriction on awarding contracts.**— No contract shall be awarded to persons appearing on the list or to any firm, corporation, partnership, or association in which the persons have an interest until three years have elapsed from the date of publication of the list.

§ 3145. Regulations governing contractors and subcontractors (formerly Copeland Act provision)

(a) **In General.**— The Secretary of Labor shall prescribe reasonable regulations for contractors and subcontractors engaged in constructing, carrying out, completing, or repairing public buildings, public works, or buildings or works that at least partly are financed by a loan or grant from the Federal Government. The regulations shall include a provision that each contractor and subcontractor each week must furnish a statement on the wages paid each employee during the prior week.

(b) **Application.** — Section 1001 of title 18 applies to the statements.

§ 3146. Effect on other federal laws

This subchapter does not supersede or impair any authority otherwise granted by federal law to provide for the establishment of specific wage rates.

§ 3147. Suspension of this subchapter during a national emergency

The President may suspend the provisions of the subchapter during a national emergency.

§ 3148. Application of this subchapter to certain contracts

This subchapter applies to a contract authorized by law that is made without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes ([41 U.S.C. 5](#)), or on a cost-plus-a-fixed-fee basis or otherwise without advertising for proposals, if this subchapter otherwise would apply to the contract.

SUBCHAPTER V – VOLUNTEER SERVICES

§ 3161. Purpose

It is the purpose of this subchapter to promote and provide opportunities for individuals who wish to volunteer their services to state or local governments, public agencies, or nonprofit charitable organizations in the construction, repair, or alteration (including painting and decorating) of public buildings and public works that at least partly are financed with federal financial assistance authorized under certain federal programs and that otherwise might not be possible without the use of volunteers.

§ 3162. Waiver for individuals who perform volunteer services

(a) **Criteria for Receiving Waiver.**— The requirement that certain laborers and mechanics be paid in accordance with the wage-setting provisions of subchapter IV of this chapter as set forth in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act ([25 U.S.C. 450](#) et seq.), the Indian Health Care Improvement Act ([25 U.S.C. 1601](#) et

seq.), and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 ([42 U.S.C. 5301](#) et seq.) does not apply to an individual—

- (1) who volunteers to perform a service directly to a state or local government, a public agency, or a public or private nonprofit recipient of federal assistance—
 - (A) for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons;
 - (B) only for the personal purpose or pleasure of the individual;
 - (C) without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered, except as provided in subsection (b); and
 - (D) freely and without pressure or coercion, direct or implied, from any employer;
- (2) whose contribution of service is not for the direct or indirect benefit of any contractor otherwise performing or seeking to perform work on the same project for which the individual is volunteering;
- (3) who is not employed by and does not provide services to a contractor or subcontractor at any time on the federally assisted or insured project for which the individual is volunteering; and
- (4) who otherwise is not employed by the same public agency or recipient of federal assistance to perform the same type of services as those for which the individual proposes to volunteer.

(b) Payments.—

- (1) **In accordance with regulations.**— Volunteers described in subsection (a) who are performing services directly to a state or local government or public agency may receive payments of expenses, reasonable benefits, or a nominal fee only in accordance with regulations the Secretary of Labor prescribes. Volunteers who are performing services directly to a public or private nonprofit entity may not receive those payments.
- (2) **Criteria and content of regulations.**— In prescribing the regulations, the Secretary shall consider criteria such as the total amount of payments made (relating to expenses, benefits, or fees) in the context of the economic realities. The regulations shall include provisions that provide that—
 - (A) a payment for an expense may be received by a volunteer for items such as uniform allowances, protective gear and clothing, reimbursement for approximate out-of-pocket expenses, or the cost or expense of meals and transportation;
 - (B) a reasonable benefit may include the inclusion of a volunteer in a group insurance plan (such as a liability, health, life, disability, or worker's compensation plan) or pension plan, or the awarding of a length of service award; and
 - (C) a nominal fee may not be used as a substitute for compensation and may not be connected to productivity.

(3) Nominal fee.— The Secretary shall decide what constitutes a nominal fee for purposes of paragraph (2)(C). The decision shall be based on the context of the economic realities of the situation involved.

(c) Economic Reality.— In determining whether an expense, benefit, or fee described in subsection (b) may be paid to volunteers in the context of the economic realities of the particular situation, the Secretary may not permit any expense, benefit, or fee that has the effect of undermining labor standards by creating downward pressure on prevailing wages in the local construction industry.

Title 18, Part I, Chapter 41:

§ 874. Kickbacks from public works employees

Whoever, by force, intimidation, or threat of procuring dismissal from employment, or by any other manner whatsoever induces any person employed in the construction, prosecution, completion or repair of any public building, public work, or building or work financed in whole or in part by loans or grants from the United States, to give up any part of the compensation to which he is entitled under his contract of employment, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.