

## 2007 ASSEMBLY BILL 533

October 16, 2007 – Introduced by Representatives SCHNEIDER and GRIGSBY.  
Referred to Committee on Labor and Industry.

- 1 **AN ACT to create** 103.12, 106.54 (8) and 111.91 (2) (im) of the statutes; **relating**  
2 **to:** employer monitoring of employee electronic mail usage.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

Current law does not regulate employer monitoring of employee electronic mail (e-mail) usage. This bill prohibits any employer, including the state, from monitoring any e-mail message sent or received by an employee unless the employee sends or receives the message through a computer owned by the employer and the employer: 1) provides written notice to the employee of the employer's policy regarding the monitoring of employee e-mail usage when the employee is hired and not less than once each year after that; and 2) provides written notice to the employee of any change in that policy not less than 30 days before the effective date of the change in policy. The notice must include a statement of the purposes for which employee e-mail messages are monitored and the frequency with which that monitoring is conducted and a statement for the employee to sign acknowledging that the employee has received and understands the notice.

The bill also prohibits an employer from monitoring any e-mail message sent or received by an employee because the employee has exercised or is exercising, or because the employer believes that the employee has exercised, is exercising, or may exercise, his or her right to form, join, or assist a labor organization, to bargain collectively, and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. In addition, the bill provides that an employee has a reasonable expectation of privacy in the content of any personal e-mail message sent or received by the employee and prohibits an employer from

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monitoring the content of such a message except as necessary to determine whether the message is personal or work related or to protect any trade secret or other confidential business information of the employer.

The bill provides, however, that an employer is not prohibited from monitoring the number or frequency of the personal e-mail messages sent or received by an employee to ascertain the efficiency or productivity of the employee or from using any electronic or other device to manage the e-mail messages coming into or going out of the employer's computerized communication system solely for the purpose of system maintenance, security, or protection and not for the purpose of monitoring the e-mail messages sent or received by any particular employee.

Finally, under the bill, an employee whose e-mail messages are monitored in violation of the bill or who is discharged or discriminated against for opposing a practice prohibited under the bill, filing a complaint or attempting to enforce any right granted under the bill, or testifying or assisting in any action or proceeding to enforce any right under the bill may file a complaint with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and DWD must process the complaint in the same manner as employment discrimination complaints are processed under current law, which processing may include the ordering of back pay, reinstatement, or compensation in lieu of reinstatement.

For further information see the *state and local* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

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***The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:***

1           **SECTION 1.** 103.12 of the statutes is created to read:

2           **103.12 Monitoring of electronic mail. (1) DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

3           (a) "Electronic mail message" means any message transmitted by means of a  
4 computerized communication system.

5           (b) "Employer" includes the state and any office, department, independent  
6 agency, authority, institution, association, society, or other body in state government  
7 created or authorized to be created by the constitution or any law, including the  
8 legislature and the courts.

9           (c) "Message" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds,  
10 data, or intelligence of any nature or any transfer of a computer program, as defined  
11 in s. 943.70 (1) (c).

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1 (d) “Monitor” means to intercept, observe, review, or examine through the use  
2 of any electronic or other device.

3 **(2) PERMITTED MONITORING.** (a) Subject to sub. (3), an employer may not monitor  
4 any electronic mail message sent or received by an employee of the employer unless  
5 the employee sends or receives the electronic mail message through a computer  
6 owned by the employer and the employer does all of the following:

7 1. Provides written notice to the employee of the employer’s policy regarding  
8 the monitoring of employee electronic mail usage when the employee is hired and not  
9 less than once each year after that.

10 2. Provides written notice to the employee of any change in the employer’s  
11 policy regarding the monitoring of employee electronic mail usage not less than 30  
12 days before the effective date of the change in policy. An employer may not change  
13 its policy regarding the monitoring of employee electronic mail usage retroactively  
14 or change that policy to permit the monitoring of employee electronic mail messages  
15 that originated before the effective date of the change in policy.

16 (b) A notice under par. (a) 1. or 2. shall include all of the following:

17 1. A statement of the purposes for which employee electronic mail messages are  
18 monitored and the frequency with which that monitoring is conducted.

19 2. A statement for the employee to sign acknowledging that the employee has  
20 received and understands the notice. The employer shall give the employee one copy  
21 of the notice signed by the employee and shall retain one copy in its files.

22 **(3) PROHIBITED MONITORING.** (a) Subject to par. (c), an employer may not monitor  
23 any electronic mail message sent or received by an employee because the employee  
24 has exercised or is exercising, or because the employer believes that the employee has

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1 exercised, is exercising, or may exercise, any right guaranteed under s. 111.04, 111.70  
2 (2), or 111.82 or under 29 USC 157.

3 (b) An employee has a reasonable expectation of privacy in the content of any  
4 personal electronic mail message sent or received by the employee. Subject to par.  
5 (c), an employer may not monitor the content of any electronic mail message sent or  
6 received by an employee except as necessary to determine whether the electronic  
7 mail message is personal or work related or to protect any trade secret, as defined  
8 in s. 134.90 (1) (c), or other confidential business information of the employer.

9 (c) Paragraphs (a) and (b) do not prohibit an employer from doing any of the  
10 following:

11 1. Monitoring the number or frequency of the personal electronic mail  
12 messages sent or received by an employee to ascertain the efficiency or productivity  
13 of the employee.

14 2. Using any electronic or other device to manage the electronic mail messages  
15 coming into or going out of the employer's computerized communication system  
16 solely for the purpose of system maintenance, security, or protection and not for the  
17 purpose of monitoring the electronic mail messages sent or received by any  
18 particular employee.

19 **(4) DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS PROHIBITED.** No employer may discharge or  
20 otherwise discriminate against any person for opposing a practice prohibited under  
21 this section, filing a complaint or attempting to enforce any right under this section,  
22 or testifying or assisting in any action or proceeding to enforce any right under this  
23 section.

24 **(5) ENFORCEMENT.** An employee whose electronic mail messages are monitored  
25 in violation of sub. (2) or (3) or who is discharged or otherwise discriminated against

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1 in violation of sub. (4) may file a complaint with the department and the department  
2 shall process the complaint in the same manner as employment discrimination  
3 complaints are processed under s. 111.39.

4 **SECTION 2.** 106.54 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

5 106.54 (8) The division shall receive complaints under s. 103.12 (5) and shall  
6 process the complaints in the same manner as employment discrimination  
7 complaints are processed under s. 111.39.

8 **SECTION 3.** 111.91 (2) (im) of the statutes is created to read:

9 111.91 (2) (im) Employee electronic mail usage requirements that provide  
10 fewer rights and remedies to employees than are provided under s. 103.12.

11 **SECTION 4. Initial applicability.**

12 (1) This act first applies to an employee who, on the day before the effective date  
13 of this subsection, is covered by a collective bargaining agreement that contains  
14 provisions inconsistent with section 103.12 of the statutes, as created by this act, on  
15 the day on which the collective bargaining agreement expires or is extended,  
16 modified, or renewed, whichever occurs first.

17 (END)