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## **Governor Abbott Signs Office of Injured Employee Counsel’s Legislative Recommendation into Law**

*Senate Bill 901 by Senator Eltife and House Bill 1607 by Representative Collier benefit low-income injured employees*

**Austin, Texas – May 27, 2015** – Thursday May 21<sup>st</sup>, Governor Greg Abbott signed legislation to amend Texas Labor Code Section 408.103(a)(2) to raise the workers’ compensation benchmark hourly earnings rate from \$8.50 an hour to \$10.00 – an increase of \$1.50 an hour.

The benchmark hourly earnings rate has not changed since it became effective September 1, 1993—more than 20 years ago. However, the minimum wage in Texas and the poverty level hourly wage have continued to increase.

“The passing of Senate Bill 901 will provide approximately 3,000 low-income injured employees receiving workers’ compensation benefits with additional temporary income benefits (TIBs)” said Jessica Corna, Public Counsel for the Office of Injured Employee Counsel.

TIBs are the first level of income benefits that an injured employee may receive after being injured at work and are calculated as a portion of the injured employee’s average weekly wage less post-injury earnings. Currently, if the employee earns less than \$8.50 an hour, the TIBs amount is 75 percent of the employee’s average weekly wage less post-injury earnings. For those making \$8.50 an hour or more, the TIBs amount is 70 percent of the employee’s average weekly wage less post-injury earnings. After 26 weeks, all TIBs are calculated at the rate of 70%, regardless of income level.

### ***About the Office of Injured Employee Counsel:***

*The Office of Injured Employee Counsel (OIEC) is the state agency that assists, educates, and advocates on behalf of the injured employees of Texas. OIEC was established in 2005 by the Texas Legislature to ensure that injured employees or their beneficiaries who don’t have legal representation get the help they need to navigate the Workers’ Compensation Dispute Resolution System. OIEC has 21 offices throughout Texas with a central office located in Austin. The Agency’s services include advocacy, customer service and dispute assistance through OIEC’s Ombudsman Program.*

For more about the Office of Injured Employee Counsel visit [oiec.texas.gov](http://oiec.texas.gov)