

Amendments to this law are indicated by notation and red text

**TITLE 31. MASHANTUCKET EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS LAW**

**CHAPTER 1.**

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 1 § 1

**§ 1. Short Title**

This law shall be known as the Mashantucket Employment Rights Law.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 1 § 2

**§ 2. Findings, Purpose and Authority**

**Following are amended Sections 2(a)(2) and 2(b)(1)-(2)**

a. The Tribe finds that:

(1) It has enacted various laws that govern aspects of employment on the Reservation; however, it does not have a centralized office to oversee the regulation of employment on the Reservation whether it concerns tribal or non-tribal employees.

(2) There is a need for a centralized process to **regulate employment** for all employers on the Reservation.

(3) There is a need for an administrative process that utilizes the cultural preference for the resolution of disputes through a non-adversarial process such as the Peacemaker's Council. It is therefore important to the Tribe that employees and employers have an avenue to mediate and resolve disputes in this manner.

(4) It recognizes its continued commitment to create and foster a diverse employment atmosphere where differences are respected. This commitment can best be fulfilled through the establishment of the Mashantucket Pequot Employment Rights Office to oversee, coordinate and enforce tribal employment laws and assist employees and employers in understanding the requirements of those laws.

b. The purpose of this Law is:

(1) To promote responsible Tribal governance and self sufficiency of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation by creating a centralized Mashantucket **Employment** Rights Office to coordinate and regulate equitable employment on the Mashantucket Pequot Reservation and various other Tribal Entities.

(2) To create a structure for the Mashantucket **Employment** Rights Office that includes the position of Director to oversee the office, and a

Mediation panel to bring the culture of the Tribe and its preference for non-adversarial resolution of disputes to this structure.

c. Authority

The Tribe enacts this law as an exercise of its inherent sovereign powers and the powers delegated to it by the Constitution of the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribe.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 1 § 3

**§ 3. Definitions**

**Following are renumbered Sections 3(b) through 3(l)  
due to deletion of old subsections 3(b) and 3(c)**

For purposes of this Title:

a. The term "conflict of interest" means the existence of a relationship between a person in a decision-making position with another person, employer or entity that may improperly influence the person's decision making to the detriment of the Tribe and shall include the appearance of a conflict even if the person believes the relationship would not affect his or her judgment in a matter.

b. The term "Employee" shall mean any individual employed by an employer with or without a contract. This includes but is not limited to part-time employees, full time employees, and regular.

c. The term "Employer" shall mean any person, company, contractor, subcontractor or other entity located or engaged in work on the Reservation, trust lands and all area within the exterior boundaries of the reservation employing two or more persons, without regard for whether the employer or its owner is Indian or Non-Indian or a member of the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribe or not. The term "employer" excludes Federal, State and County governments.

d. The term "MERO" means the Mashantucket Employment Rights Office.

e. The term "order of agreement" shall mean a written explanation of the agreement contemplated by the two parties and witnessed by the mediation panel.

f. The term "Person" means both persons and artificial persons, including, but not limited to corporations, partnerships, joint ventures, lessees, contractors, subcontractors, sole proprietorships, associations, trustees, public officials, Board members, fiduciaries and a private interest or private party and their agents.

g. The term "Reservation" means the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Reservation, as that term is defined in 25 U.S.C. § 1752(7) together with any lands held by the United States government in trust for the Tribe or any other area subject to the Tribe's jurisdiction.

h. The term "Record" means the written documentation of all evidence (whether by way of testimony or documentary) presented to the MERO in a particular case or matter.

i. The term "Tribal Council" shall mean the governing body of the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribe as outlined in the Tribal Constitution.

j. The term "Tribal Entity" shall include all departments, businesses, boards and entities owned and operated by or under the auspices of the government and/or any branch of the government of the Tribe.

k. The terms "Tribal Member" and "Member" shall mean any person who is duly enrolled as a member of the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribe.

l. The term "Tribe" shall mean the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Tribe also known as the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

## CHAPTER 2.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 2 § 1

### **§ 1. Establishment of Mashantucket Employment Rights Office**

There is hereby established the Mashantucket Employment Rights Office charged with carrying out all tasks assigned to it by tribal law related to the regulation of employment on the Reservation. The Director of MERO shall be the head of the office as more fully established and described in Chapter 2, Section 4 of this law, and shall carry out the day to day functions and duties of the MERO. The Mediation panel established by Chapter 2, Section 5 of this law shall provide employees and employers with an opportunity to resolve disputes through a non-adversarial process.

**Following is renumbered Chapter 2, Section 2 due to deletion of old Section 2; and new subsections 2(c)(10) and 2(c)(11), and subsequent renumbered subsections 2(c)(12) and 2(c)(13)**

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 2 § 2

### **§ 2. Establishment of the MERO Director Position**

a. There is hereby established the position of the Director of MERO who shall have primary responsibility for day-to-day administration and operation of MERO and its employees. The compensation for this position shall be competitive and set by Tribal Council and the Director shall report directly to Tribal Council.

b. The Director shall be appointed by the majority vote of the Tribal Council based only on the recommendation of the joint action of the Judicial Committee and Administrative Support Committee which shall

select a candidate provided that the candidate must meet the following minimum qualifications:

(1) Be licensed to practice law and be in good standing in the state of Connecticut and have practiced in the area of labor and employment law for a minimum of 10 years, or have a either a Juris Doctorate or a Master's Degree and have a minimum of 10 years experience in government regulation, employment or administration;

(2) Demonstrate an ability to organize and manage a newly formed government office in the nature of MERO;

(3) Have familiarity with or experience in tribal employment rights or equivalent type of experience;

(4) Demonstrate excellent communication and organizational skills;

(5) Be of the highest ethical and moral character; and

(6) Submit to and pass a background check, including a criminal background check and any required licensing.

c. The Director shall have those powers deemed necessary to properly carry out the duties and functions of the MERO which include but are not limited to the following:

(1) To develop a budget for MERO for submission and approval by Tribal Council;

(2) To supervise expenditures pursuant to the approved budget, and guard against and report any misuse or fraudulent use of the monies allocated pursuant to the budget;

(3) To develop, execute, and oversee a plan for implementation and distribution of this law and for any rules, regulations, procedures and/or guidelines established by MERO, to all employers and to all government or tribal entities receiving contracts or grants for work to be done on the Reservation;

(4) To perform any duty or requirement imposed upon the Director by any tribal law, including but not limited to any and all requirements related to Indian and tribal preferences;

(5) To adopt rules, regulations and/or procedures for the operation of the MERO;

(6) To hire personnel as required for the efficient operation of the MERO and as approved in the MERO budget. Initially, such personnel shall, at a minimum, include an administrative assistant and an investigator;

(7) To accept and review any claims, complaints, requests for information or any other matter related to the MERO office or as referred to MERO by any other tribal law;

(8) To conduct or direct personnel to conduct any necessary investigations;

(9) To assign, where appropriate, any of the above duties to MERO personnel;

(10) To adopt rules and/or regulations to insure that confidential information is kept confidential by the MERO, provided that nothing herein precludes the MERO from providing information to other parties to a case for adequate case processing or to the Tribal Court in conjunction with an appeal or enforcement action;

(11) To keep a written record of all proceedings before it and compile an official Record in all matters before it that shall include, at a minimum, a transcript of all testimony given and true and accurate copies of all documentary evidence considered by the MERO;

(12) To conduct surveys including those of Tribal Members, Native Americans, employers and tribal entities that work for the Tribe to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of tribal employment rights laws; and

(13) To create and generate quarterly reports and statistics of MERO complaints; including but not limited to the success of the complaint, how it was resolved, and who were the parties to the complaint and bring those statistics to Tribal Council.

**Following is renumbered Section 3 and amended Section 3(f)**

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 2 § 3

**§ 3. Establishment of Mediation Panel**

a. There is hereby established a mediation panel to help resolve disputes between employers and employees arising under the Tribe's labor and employment laws. The mediation panel shall be comprised of three members from the Tribe's Peacemaker's Council who will be designated, on a case by case basis, by the Chair of the Peacemaker's Council provided that each member of the panel meet the following qualifications:

(1) Have a bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience with the Tribe;

(2) Have the highest moral and ethical character;

(3) Submit to and pass a background check, including a criminal background check and any required licensing;

(4) Demonstrate good judgment and communication skills, and a positive work ethic demonstrated through evaluations and attendance records from work experience; and

(5) Complete training or educational programs in Indian and tribal preference in employment, non-discrimination law, tribal law, federal Indian law, and other areas as determined by the Director of MERO.

b. The Chair of the Peacemaker's Council shall establish rules and regulations to govern mediation before the panel, and for determining the composition of the mediation panel.

c. The Director shall establish rules and regulations for an employer or employee to request mediation and referral to mediation.

d. All parties to any mediation before this panel must agree to the mediation as a first step to the resolution of a dispute between the parties.

e. At the end of a mediation agreement, there shall be a written order of agreement between the parties that shall be signed by the parties and the mediation panel.

f. If an agreement can not be met at the end of the mediation process, or if there is a violation of the order of agreement that the parties signed after mediation, the process will continue in the MERO's processes for the applicable case.

### CHAPTER 3.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 3 § 1

#### § 1. Scope of Coverage

a. This Law shall apply to all areas within the Reservation and shall apply to all persons, employees, employers, whether tribal or non-tribal, subject to the jurisdiction of the Tribe and Tribal law.

b. This Law shall be effective as of the date of its enactment.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 3 § 2

Following is a new Chapter 3, Section 2 and renumbered Sections 3 - 5

#### § 2. Hearings.

a. Any hearings held before the MERO or in a proceeding under the auspices of the MERO must provide at a minimum the following procedural protections:

1. Written notice of the hearing, by certified mail return receipt requested, or in such other manner determined to be effective under the circumstances, to all interested parties including the claimant, the party against whom the allegations have been made, and the MERO Director. At a minimum, the notice shall include:

(a) the date, time and location of the hearing;

- (b) the nature of the hearing;
- (c) the right to be present and to participate in the hearing;
- (d) the right to present witnesses and documentary evidence and to cross examine witnesses;
- (e) the right to be represented by legal counsel at the party's own expense; and
- (f) a copy of any rules or regulations governing the hearing.

2. Subpoena. On its own initiative or upon request of any Person notified of the hearing, the MERO may subpoena identified witnesses, documents or records.

3. Each party notified of the hearing shall have the right to be present at and participate in the hearing. Other persons claiming to be interested in the matter may petition the MERO to participate;

4. Each party shall have the right to present relevant sworn testimony and documentary evidence;

5. Each party shall have the right to call witnesses and to cross examine witnesses called by any other hearing participant;

6. Compliance with formal rules of evidence is not required, provided that the hearing is conducted in a manner that provides for the determination of the facts in an orderly and reasonable manner;

7. All proceedings shall be recorded and a complete transcript shall be made and maintained by the MERO;

8. The proceedings may be adjourned, postponed, or continued at the discretion of the MERO when it determines it is advisable or necessary; and

9. Any matter to be proven must be done so by a preponderance of the evidence, unless otherwise provided in applicable Law.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 3 § 3

**§ 3. Conflict with Other Laws or Policies**

To the extent that any provision of this Law conflicts with any other law or any policy or procedure issued by any person, employer or Tribal entity, this law shall govern; except if expressly provided otherwise herein.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 3 § 4

**§ 4. Severability**

If any provision or part of this Law or its application to any person or circumstances is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Law

and the unaffected provisions of the Law shall continue to be in full force and effect.

31 M.P.T.L. ch. 3 § 5

**§ 5. Sovereign Immunity**

Nothing contained in this Title shall be construed to waive the sovereign immunity of the Tribe or any arm, subdivision, department, commission, office, officer, employee or agent of the Tribe, including the MERO, the MERO Mediation Panel, and the MERO Director all as established by this title.

**Historical and Statutory Notes**

**Derivation.** Effective July 6, 2007, TCR070607-08 of 20 enacted the Mashantucket Employment Rights Ordinance.

**Amendments.** Effective June 29, 2009, TCR062909-05 of 06