

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

HOUSE COMMITTEE UNITES TO CLAMP DOWN ON INDIAN FIRMS' USE OF H-1B VISAS

By Jacob Gershman and Rebecca Davis O'Brien
December 31, 2017

The New Year ushers in a spate of new laws from state houses across the country affecting undocumented immigrants, gun owners, barbers, working parents with babies, and college students, among others. Some reflect national anxieties, some respond to current events and some are just quirky. Tennessee residents, for example, no longer have to leave their homes to get a haircut under a new law allowing barber house calls. And New Jersey will become the latest state to legalize and regulate daily fantasy sports contests. Here are some highlights:

'SANCTUARY STATE'

California hasn't quite outlawed local cooperation with federal immigration authorities, but a new law tries to keep it to a minimum.

The measure prohibits local law enforcement from detaining or questioning people for immigration-enforcement purposes and calls for the drafting of rules to limit assistance with immigration enforcement "to the fullest extent possible" in "safe zones," like public schools, libraries, hospitals and local courthouses.

Signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in October, the law comes with major carve-outs, excluding violent criminals and other felons from protections. It doesn't stop federal officials from conducting jailhouse interviews with inmates suspected of entering the country illegally.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Some laws taking effect aim to secure more rights for job applicants and employees. Most private employees in New York are now eligible for up to eight weeks of paid family leave. The job-protected period for bonding with a new child is supposed to go up to 12 weeks in 2021.

A California law makes it illegal for companies with five or more employees to ask job applicants if they have been convicted of crimes unless there has been a conditional job offer, the latest expansion of the "Ban the Box" movement.

GUN LIMITS

California and Oregon are rolling out new gun restrictions. The Golden State is imposing stricter regulations on ammunition purchases by requiring online sales to be processed by a licensed ammunition vendor. The state also added hate crimes to the list of misdemeanor offenses that come with ten-year bans on firearm possession.

Oregon has a new law aimed at keeping firearms out of the hands of the mentally troubled. If a police officer or a family member of a gun owner thinks the person poses an imminent

threat to themselves or others, they can ask a judge to impose a temporary weapon ban. At least four other states have enacted similar "extreme risk protection order" laws.

CAMPUS SPEECH

Tennessee's Campus Free Speech Protection Act seeks to stop school administrations from banning speakers for espousing ideas that are offensive, immoral, conservative or liberal. Its enactment follows a trio of new laws in Colorado, Kentucky and Utah abolishing college "free speech zones" that restrict protests and rallies to narrow slices of campus.

Missouri, meanwhile, has expanded the list of crimes that can be expunged from a convicted offender's criminal record.

SOME SMOKE

On the vice front, Californians no longer need to have a medical reason to smoke marijuana as it becomes the latest state to legalize recreational use. The state, though, has made it unlawful to smoke or eat pot while driving or riding in a car.

Maine, which legalized recreational pot in 2016, has banned companies from firing employees for testing positive marijuana use unless they can prove the drug damaged job performance. That statute takes effect in February.

And Oregon is the fifth state to raise the tobacco purchase age to 21 from 18.