

# The Dallas Morning News

## **Protect Texas worker benefits**

*Federal regulation has helped the state's economy succeed for 50 years.*

Glenn Hamer

*Dallas Morning News*

September 12, 2024

<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2024/09/12/protect-texas-worker-benefits/>

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, a landmark piece of legislation that has safeguarded American workers' benefits and played an instrumental role in ensuring the economic stability and growth of businesses across the nation. As we commemorate this significant milestone, it is essential to recognize how ERISA has fortified Texas' reputation as a pro-business powerhouse and why preserving this law is paramount to maintaining our competitive edge.

ERISA was enacted in 1974 to address widespread concerns about the mismanagement of employee benefit plans, ensuring that pensions, 401(k)s, health insurance and other vital benefits promised to workers would be delivered as promised. Over the past five decades, ERISA has provided a consistent and reliable regulatory framework that allows businesses to plan with confidence, offering their employees the benefits they deserve while minimizing the administrative burdens associated with operating across multiple states.

In the Lone Star State, the stability provided by ERISA is a cornerstone of our thriving business environment. This uniform framework is vital for attracting and retaining top-tier talent, supporting the creation of world-class jobs that define Texas, and nurturing an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

However, in recent years across the country, and even here in Texas, there have been efforts to introduce state laws that would supersede or sidestep federal ERISA regulations. These proposals risk imposing significant financial and operational burdens on employers — particularly small businesses that are already navigating a challenging economic environment. For small businesses in particular, ERISA's protections are a lifeline, enabling them to thrive in a competitive marketplace while still offering valuable benefits to their workforce.

Last year in Texas, a proposal aimed at preempting ERISA law was introduced. If enacted, this measure would have hindered Texas employers' ability to provide affordable health care benefits to their employees, impacting their bottom line and diminishing our state's attractiveness to businesses looking to relocate or expand.

In America, health care costs are already a major concern for businesses and workers alike. The last thing we need is additional regulatory complexities that exacerbate these challenges.

At the Texas Association of Business, we believe that preserving ERISA needs to be a top priority. State leaders must reaffirm their commitment to ERISA and resist the push for additional state-level regulations that could disrupt the delicate balance that has been so carefully maintained over the past 50 years. By standing with the business community and upholding the federal oversight that ERISA provides, Texas can maintain its position as a prime example of economic resilience and growth.

The anticipated rise in health care costs in 2024 emphasizes the vital need to uphold the regulatory consistency provided by ERISA. Imposing additional state-level mandates would not only create a patchwork of regulations that increase compliance costs but also discourage businesses from expanding their operations in Texas — ultimately damaging our economy.

Preserving ERISA will safeguard the long-term success of Texas businesses, support the health and well-being of our workforce, and continue to attract the investments and innovation that make our state's economy the blueprint for the rest of America.

As we celebrate 50 years of ERISA, let us recommit to the principles that have made Texas the envy of the nation and work toward sustaining this crucial piece of legislation for the next 50 years.

*Glenn Hamer is the president and CEO of the Texas Association of Business.*

###