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State Resources

Mississippi Department of
Employment Security
<https://mdes.ms.gov> in conjunction with <https://www.dol.gov>

Reviewing Your
MISSISSIPPI
Job Offer

Federal Resources
Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission
<http://www.eeoc.gov>

Does your job offer require that you sign a non-compete agreement?

Mississippi courts have historically provided factors that are relevant when assessing whether a non-compete agreement is enforceable. Factors that often appear to be relevant include reasonable regarding geographic scope, time limitations, and the restrictions placed upon an employee engaging in his primary employment. Another factor that has been reviewed in Mississippi courts relates to whether an employee was terminated by the employer, ostensibly in bad faith, shortly after being bound by a non-compete agreement.

Does your salary match the salary of your co-workers?

In 2022, Mississippi became the last state in the U.S. to pass a pay equity law, known as the Mississippi Equal Pay for Equal Work Act. This law brings Mississippi in line with many other states, and requires that "No employer may pay an employee a wage at a rate less than the rate at which an employee of the opposite sex in the same establishment is paid for equal work on a job, the performance of which requires equal skill, education, effort and responsibility, and which is performed under similar working conditions, except where payment is made pursuant to differential based on: (a) A seniority system; (b) A merit system; (c) A system which measures earnings by quantity or quality of production; or (d) Any other factor other than sex."

Additionally, the National Labor Relations Act prohibits the rights of any employee covered by the Act to discuss wages in face-to-face conversations and written messages. While employers may have policies against the use of company equipment when using some types of electronic communications, like social media, it is still the case that policies that specifically prohibit the discussion of wages are themselves unlawful.

Assuming your employment is "at will," can you negotiate for contractual protections?

It is not common to negotiate for additional contractual protections, but this is a question that should especially be reviewed for potential employees seeking executive level positions as well as positions that require an employee with specialized skills. For these situations, it is recommended to seek advice of an attorney. And further to these general factors, employees may also be able to negotiate for various job benefits, such as training opportunities. Even when it is not possible to negotiate for benefits that are governed by company-wide policies, such as perhaps retirement benefits or health benefits, it is often beneficial to compare and consider these benefits when assessing multiple job offers.

Have you properly excluded your individual inventions prior to accepting your job offer?

As an initial matter, inventor(s) are presumed to be owners of any patent rights that stem from their invention unless those patent rights have otherwise been properly assigned. See 37 CFR 1.41 Inventorship; See Manual of Patent Examination Procedure 2109 Inventorship.

With that said, it is not unusual for employers to ask employees to sign an agreement requiring employees to assign inventions created during the course of their employment to the employer. It is often beneficial for employees who have their own inventions to identify any and all inventions and other intellectual property (IP) to which they intend to retain ownership rights. It is highly encouraged to consult with a lawyer when employees are looking to negotiate a contract that involves the assignment of individual inventions.

Does your job offer require that you sign a forced arbitration agreement?

On March 3, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021, prohibiting employers from enforcing predispute arbitration agreements and class action waivers that concern sexual harassment and sexual assault claims. As a result of this act, employers are not allowed to require claims of sexual harassment or sexual assault be brought in arbitration. Those types of claims may be brought in court, either individually or as collective or class claims, regardless of the existence of an arbitration agreement.

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