



# “Deep Cleaning” Outdated Handbooks, Policies, and Agreements

*April 9th, 2026*

Get a free PDF download of our  
**2026 Employee Handbook  
Spring Cleaning Checklist**



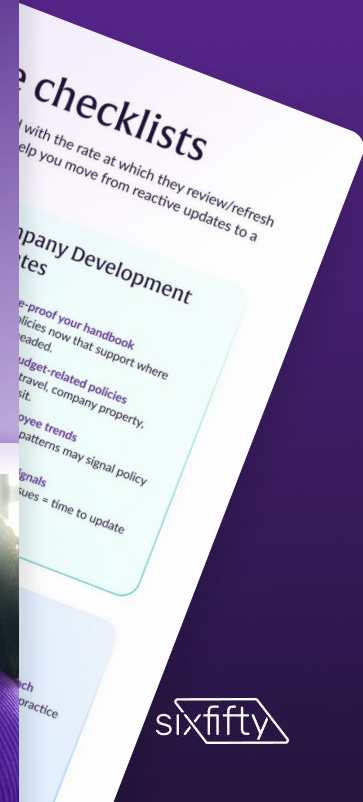
SixFifty | Employment Law Compliance Platform

What's changed in 2026—and how to spruce things up

# Employee Handbook Spring Cleaning Checklist

A lot can change in just a few months, making spring the perfect time to dust off your handbook.

Use this checklist to review your policies, clean up outdated language, and ensure your handbook reflects the latest employment law changes.



# Agenda

**1** Key Legal Updates

**2** Maintenance Tips and Other Docs to Consider

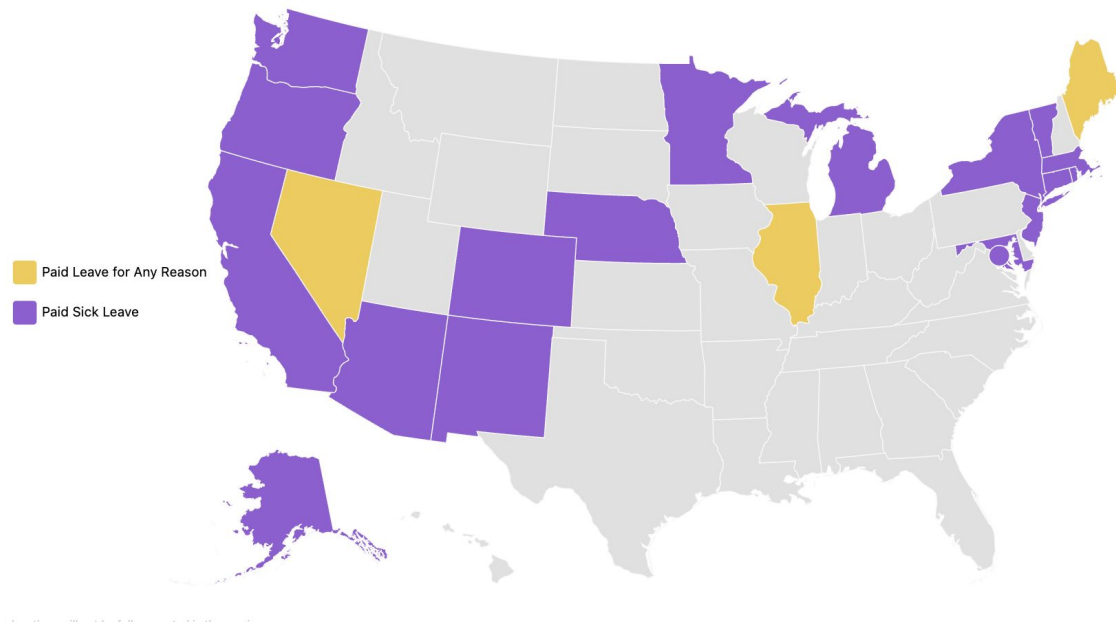
**3** Handbook Structure & Best Practices

# A neglected handbook is a risky move

- **A quarter of HR teams are letting their handbook go 2+ years in between reviews—despite over 250 changes to employment law last year alone**
  - 42% of HR teams aren't satisfied with the rate at which they review and refresh their handbook, policies, and agreements
  - 50% of HR teams feel they don't have the resources they need to manage compliance
- **1 in 5 companies were faced at least one employment lawsuit in 2025**
  - Successful claims against employers for compliance-related infractions cost an average of \$180,700 per case

# Paid leave laws

- 18 states and D.C. currently require sick leave
- 21 localities require sick leave
- 3 states and 5 localities require paid leave for any reason
- No federal sick leave law
  - In reality, about 80% of U.S. employees have access to Paid Sick Leave



# Late 2025 sick leave updates

ICYMI: Sick leave changes near the end of 2025 you may have missed

**Aug 28<sup>th</sup>** →

**Missouri**

Missouri voters passed a new sick leave law in 2024, effective May 1, 2025.

However, that law was quickly repealed, effective August 28, 2025.

**Oct 1<sup>st</sup>** →

**Michigan, Nebraska**

New sick leave laws took effect in Michigan and Nebraska.

**Oct 7<sup>st</sup>** →

**California**

California expanded sick leave uses to include all the same purposes the state's domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking leave law allows, including appearing in court as a witness as required by a court order and serving on an inquest or trial jury.

**Dec 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Minneapolis, MN**

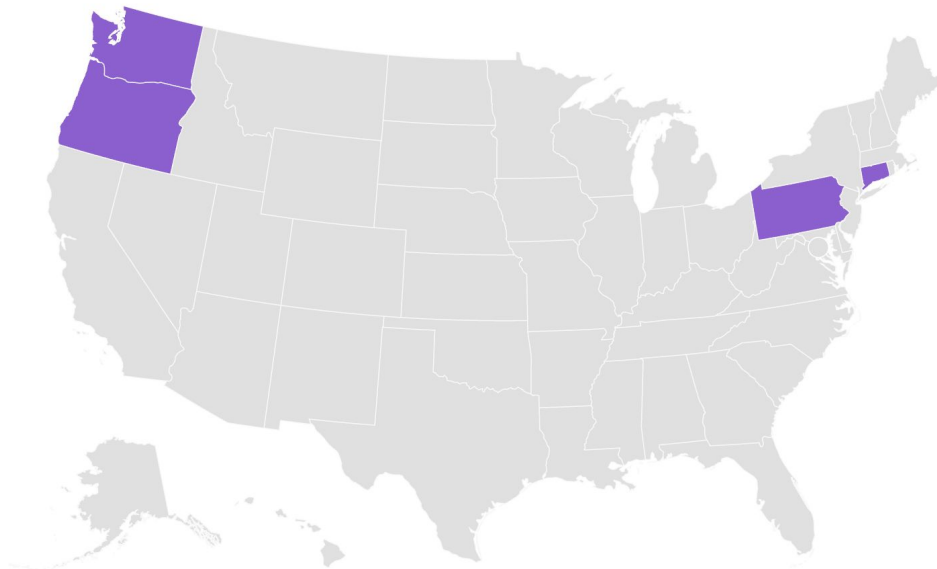
Amendments to the city's sick leave law took effect, clarifying the definition of an employee, expanding the definition of family member, repealing the 90-day waiting period, permitting fractional leave accrual, allowing leave to be taken in smaller increments, expanding the reasons leave can be used, and updating the ways employers are allowed to frontload leave.

# January 2026 changes to sick leave

## Washington

published permanent rules allowing sick leave for immigration proceedings.

**Oregon** expands sick leave uses to include blood donation.



**Connecticut** changes the employee threshold from 25 to 11 Connecticut employees.

**Pittsburgh, PA** raises sick leave accrual caps and increases accrual rate.

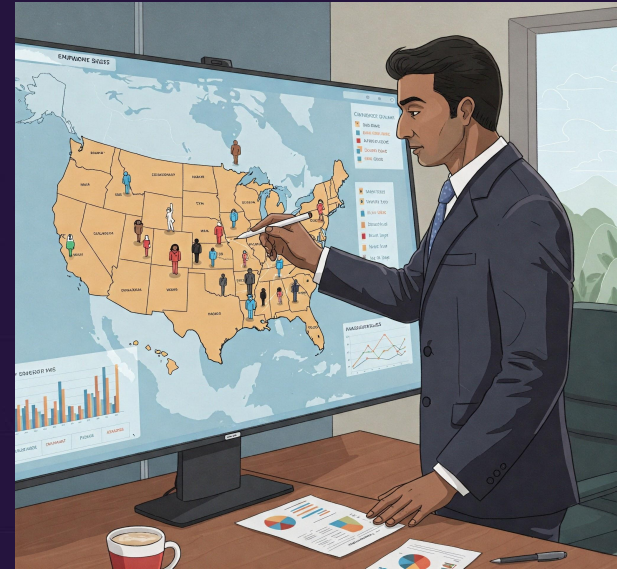
# “Which employees do I count?”

**Lawyer answer:** It depends.

Some laws clearly define which employees to count—many laws don’t provide a definition.

Examples:

- Worldwide
- In the US
- In the State/Locality
- At a worksite
- Eligible/Covered Employees



# Family and Medical Leave

- Federal FMLA
  - Required for employers with 50 or more employees
  - 12 weeks of unpaid leave
- 11 states and D.C. require unpaid FML-type leave
- 13 states and D.C. provide paid FML-type leave
  - State-run programs funded through payroll deductions



# Jan. 1st, 2026 Family and Medical Leave updates

- **California:** Premiums increased from 1.2% to 1.3% of employees' wages.
- **Colorado:** Premiums decreased from 0.9% to 0.88% of employees' wages. Leave duration extended to 12 weeks for NICU care.
- **Connecticut:** CT Paid Leave maximum benefit rate was capped at \$1,016.40 (60x state MW).
- **Delaware:** The Healthy Delaware Families Act took effect.
- **Minnesota:** Minnesota Paid Leave took effect.
- **New Jersey:** Premiums decreased from 0.33% to 0.19% of employees' taxable wages.
- **New York:** Employee contributions increased to 0.432% of gross wages (max annual contribution of \$411.91).
- **Rhode Island:** Employee benefits increased from 7 weeks to 8 weeks per year.
- **Washington:** Premiums increased to 1.13% of employees' gross wages. Further, amendments expanded job protection, notice requirements, benefits continuation, and claim periods.

# Future paid Family and Medical Leave changes

- 1 California** Employees can take leave to care for non-related, designated person, effective July 1, 2028
- 2 Maine** Payroll Contributions Jan. 1, 2025 Employee Benefits May 1, 2026
- 3 Maryland** Payroll Contributions Jan. 1, 2027 Employee Benefits Jan. 3, 2028
- 4 New Jersey** Employee eligibility broadened and leave becomes job-protected, effective July 17, 2026
- 5 Washington** Employee premium calculations amended, effective June 11, 2026

# First wave of AI regulation


AI use has exploded in all areas, including HR, and the wave of regulations is growing.

States and localities are often the first movers and that has been the case in the regulation of AI in HR.

- **California** SB 53 requires of major AI developers disclosure and transparency obligations, and institutes protections for employees who report violations of the law. Effective January 1, 2026.
- **Illinois'** AI law took effect on January 1, 2026, prohibiting AI tools from discriminating and requiring notice that AI is being used.
- **Connecticut** AG published a memo applying civil rights, privacy, and consumer protection laws to AI on February 25, 2026.
- **Colorado's** Artificial Intelligence Act takes effect June 30, 2026, requiring covered employers to create a risk management policy and program to prevent algorithmic discrimination. This is the nation's first comprehensive AI regulation.



# Updating your handbook

- **Best practice:** Review your employee handbook every month for possible updates
  - Consider changes to laws, footprint, and employee count
  - Depending on your company footprint, you may not need to make any changes
  - A little time each month can save you a lot of time down the road
- **A lot can change in a month**
  - These are just a few of the changes that have happened in March 

West Virginia	Wage and Hour	Child Labor	3/24/26	3/16/26	Share
<p>On March 16, 2026, the state's Department of Labor published <a href="#">final rules</a> that clarify the process employers must follow to obtain an age certificate before employing minor employees aged 14 through 17. The rules also address the responsibilities employers have with regard to their minor employees such as the need to have a properly issued age certificate in their possession before employing 14- or 15-year-olds and the permissible hours of work which vary depending on the minor employee's age. These requirements took effect on March 16th and last through August 1, 2031.</p>					
Washington	Equal Employment Opportunity	Pregnancy Accommodation	3/24/26	1/1/27	Share
<p>On March 16, 2026, Governor Ferguson signed <a href="#">SB 6014</a> clarifying that while employers may request that employees provide written certification from the employee's treating health care professional regarding the need for reasonable accommodation for pregnancy, this will not apply for accommodations for limits on lifting over 17 pounds. Additionally, records filed with or maintained by the state's Department of Labor and Industries that reveal the identity of, or contain any personal information about, an employee or applicant who has filed a complaint, requested assistance, or participated in an investigation are confidential and not open to public inspection. These amendments take effect on January 1, 2027.</p>					
Utah	Employment Agreements	Non-Competition	3/24/26	5/6/26	Share
<p>On March 17, 2026, Governor Cox signed <a href="#">SB 111</a> prohibiting non-competes with veterinarians unless they have at least a 5% ownership in the business. Non-solicitation agreements with veterinarians are also void. The law also prohibits non-disclosure agreements with veterinarians in which the veterinarian agrees not disclose or discuss their experience working for the employer. These provisions go into effect on May 6, 2026.</p>					
Washington	Employment Agreements	Non-Competition	3/24/26	6/30/27	Share
<p>On March 23, 2026, Governor Ferguson signed <a href="#">HB 1155</a> making all non-compete agreements void and unenforceable beginning on June 30, 2027, regardless of when the parties signed the agreement. The earnings threshold that currently allows non-competes for workers making a certain dollar amount has been removed. Employers violate the law if they (a) enforce, attempt to enforce, or threaten to enforce a non-compete, (b) represent that the employee or worker is subject to a non-compete, or (c) enter into or attempt to enter into a non-compete with an employee or worker. Non-solicitation agreements, which prohibit an employee from actively soliciting current customers or employees away from the employer, are not prohibited, but they may only prohibit solicitation of customers with whom the employee established or substantially developed a direct relationship and must expire within 18 months of termination.</p>					

# Signatures and acknowledgements

- When do you need to send your employee handbook to employees for signature or acknowledgement?
- An employee handbook **is not a contract**
- Different approaches:
  - Send out for acknowledgement every time there is a significant change
  - Make employees aware of changes as they occur and send out for acknowledgment once a year
  - Make employee aware of changes as they occur but only get acknowledgments when employees start

# Going beyond the handbook

If you're refreshing your handbook—don't forget about posters, notices, agreements, and hiring/separation procedures, too!

- Non-compliant agreements can be more costly than outdated handbooks, especially with non-competes, waivers, and separation agreements.
  - Penalties can range from fines, to invalidating past agreements, or even injunctions.
- Posters and notices can change quickly, both in content and which posters are required.
- Pennsylvania, California, and Minnesota have released new or updated posters in 2026.

# Understanding key dates

- When it comes to legal changes, not all dates are created equal
  - Laws that update regularly often change on notable days
  - Think minimum wage or salary thresholds for non-competes, employee/contractor determinations, etc.
- January 1 or July 1 are most common
  - Ad hoc changes are more likely to kick in on the 1st of the month than the 22nd
  - But watch out for laws that take effect a set number of days after passage
- Some states have set calendars that determine when new laws take effect



# Keeping up with hot topics

Just like people, governments love to follow trends

- More likely to see new laws enacted, or existing laws changed, around topics that have seen recent reform

A few current trends:

- Pay Transparency
- Protected Characteristics
- Family and Medical Leave
- Non-Competes
- Employee Privacy (e.g., biometric data)

Finding a reliable source of updates is a great way to identify trends before they impact your business



# Staying up-to-date on the law

## DIY

- Some companies assign members of their HR or Legal teams to monitor the law in the states where they have employees and update their employee handbooks.
- Must be cautious that sources aren't providing contradictory info.

## Law Firms

- Some companies rely on their outside counsel to alert them when the law changes.
- Some law firms send out emails or have web pages where they summarize changes to the law.
- Reliable, but can be pricey, and typically only accounts for one moment in time.

## SixFifty

- Automated updates so you never worry about being “current.”
- Up-to-date legal database of 50-state employment compliance info maintained by humans.
- Updates are pushed directly to your handbook, and can be surfaced in AI-powered employment law search.

# AI: Compliance solution or liability time-bomb?

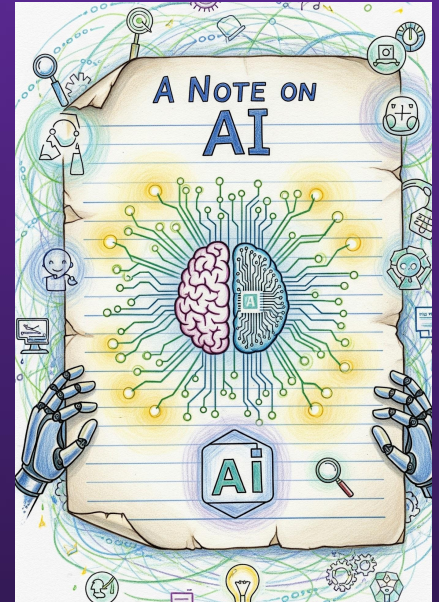
## AI use in the compliance space is increasing

- 46%\* of HR teams are planning to use generative AI for the first time in 2026 to assist with employment law compliance

## Can be a powerful tool, but only when used carefully

## Here are some best practices:

- Use it for discrete, well-defined tasks
- Understand the AI tool you use
- Ensure it has all relevant information (but don't give it confidential info)
- Always double check its work



# Building a maintainable handbook

- How is your organization changing?
  - Are you hiring in new states or leaving them?
  - Hiring new employees
- What is your update process like?
  - How are you gathering legal updates and applying them?
  - How are employees notified of changes?
- What handbook and policy structures fit best?

# State policy threshold examples

## Florida:

- Civil Air Patrol Leave: **15+ EE's**
- Immigration Law Compliance: **25+ EE's in Florida**
- Domestic Violence Leave: **50+ EE's**

## Illinois:

- Civil Air Patrol and Domestic Violence Leave: **15+ EE's**
- Election Official Leave: **25+ EE's**
- Bereavement Leave: **50+ EE's nationwide**
- School Visitation Leave: **50+ EE's in Illinois**

## Washington:

- Civil Air Patrol Leave: **20+ full-time EE's in the last year**
- Parental and Pregnancy Leave: **8+ EE's**
- Pay Transparency: **15+ EE's**
- **Seattle** has different sick leave rules for employers with 1-49, 50-249, and 250+ full-time EE's

# Updateable handbook structures

Easier for Employers

Easier for Employees

## All-in-one

### Pros

- Easy to navigate and maintain

### Cons

- Can get long if you have employees in multiple states
- Can apply different rules to employees in different states, which can be administratively complex

## Core + Addenda

### Pros

- Allows for a shorter core handbook when employers have employees in lots of states
- Relatively easy to update when hiring an employee in a new state

### Cons

- Employees may have to flip between core handbook and addenda and can compare benefits

## Separate Handbooks

### Pros

- Handbooks can be shorter and easier for employees to navigate
- Employees can't compare benefits across states

### Cons

- It can be a larger administrative burden to maintain multiple handbooks

# Updatable policy structures

## State-Specific

Individual policies for each state that precisely comply with the law

### Pros

- Provides cost savings by minimally complying with the law
- Policies are cleanly divided up by state
- Easy to update a policy to match the law

### Cons

- Requires managing different entitlements for employees across states
- Can lead to long handbooks if you have employees in many states



## Same Leave

Core policies set to comply with all of the states where you have employees.

### Pros

- Can help keep handbook short and easy to administer
- Treats employees in different states uniformly

### Cons

- Likely requires giving some employees more benefits than they are entitled to under state law
- Can be complicated to create and know when to update

# SixFifty Employee Handbook and Legal Updates

The screenshot displays the 'Research' section of the SixFifty platform. On the left is a navigation sidebar with 'Docs', 'Research' (selected), and 'Admin'. The main area features a 'Keyword Search' bar and a list of filters: 'Category' (with 'Legal Updates' selected), 'Jurisdiction' (listing Federal, Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, and Arkansas), and 'Topic' (listing Artificial Intelligence, Business and Employment Registratic, and Drug and Alcohol Testing). The main content area is titled 'Research' and includes a 'Calendar View' toggle. Below this is a table of legal updates with columns for Jurisdiction, Topic, Subtopic, Notice Date, Effective Date, and a 'Share' button.

Jurisdiction	Topic	Subtopic	Notice Date	Effective Date	Share
Utah	Work Scheduling and Conditions	Workplace Safety	3/27/26	11/1/26	Share
On March 18, 2026, Utah Governor HB 380, requiring hospitals to develop a workplace violence incident reporting system. Effective Novem...					
Washington	Equal Employment Opportunity	Pregnancy Accommodation	3/24/26	1/1/27	Share
On March 16, 2026, Governor Ferguson signed SB 6014 clarifying that while employers may request that employees provide written certifi...					
Washington	Employment Agreements	Non-Competition	3/24/26	10/1/27	Share
Washington has banned non-competes starting June 30, 2027. By October 1, 2027, an employer must make reasonable efforts to provide wr...					
Washington	Employee Privacy	Electronic Monitoring	3/24/26	6/11/26	Share
Governor Ferguson recently signed a bill to address workplace privacy and freedom of choice by prohibiting employers from requiring their ...					
Washington	Employment Agreements	Non-Competition	3/24/26	6/30/27	Share
On March 23, 2026, Governor Ferguson signed HB 1155 making all non-compete agreements void and unenforceable beginning on June 30, ...					

Q&A time!

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