

In Mass., there'll be no court challenge to workers comp rate cut

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BOSTON — Mass. Insurance Commissioner Julianne M. Bowler's decision to cut workers compensation rates by 4 percent does not appeal to all of the parties involved, but none of the parties are appealing her decision.

Officials at the Workers Compensation Rating Bureau (WCRB) had hinted that they might contest the decision after their disappointment in not getting the 8.6 percent increase they requested, but the 30-day deadline to file an appeal came and went without incident last on Sept. 25.

WCRB President Paul Meagher said history has shown him that regulators' decisions are given great weight, so the Bureau decided not to appeal.

"Our governing committee just didn't feel there were enough errors of law in the decision to warrant an appeal," he said.

But Meagher said the WCRB has already begun evaluating data to submit a filing in late February. The WCRB is required to file a request every 24 months, but can file again as soon as next spring.

The Office of the Attorney General Tom Reilly had also raised the possibility it would appeal the decision, after asking for a 20 percent decrease in rates.

Last week, Glenn Kaplan, assistant attorney general, nixed that prospect as well.

"We are not going to appeal this decision and are pleased that small to medium size businesses are going to get badly needed rate relief as a result of our intervention," he said.

Chris Goetcheus, of the Division of Insurance, had no comment. □