

When can we disconnect from work?

Proposed law seeks to stop around-the-clock contact

NEW YORK (AP) — Technology that once promised freedom from the confines of an office has, for many workers, become a ball and chain, blurring the lines between work hours and, well, any other hours.

A New York City Council member wants to put a stop to that.

The proposal would bar employers from requiring employees to respond to non-emergency emails, texts and other digital communications outside regular work hours. It would also outlaw retaliating against workers who choose to unplug.

The recently introduced legislation is only in the beginning stages, with initial committee hearings

expected sometime in June, and doubters wonder how it could work, especially in always-buzzing New York City.

But bill sponsor Rafael Espinal, a Democrat who represents parts of Brooklyn, said the legislation is needed because the city that never sleeps isn't supposed to be the city that never stops working.

"Work has spilled into our personal lives," he said. "We're always connected to our phones or to a computer once we leave the office."

It's important, he said, for people to be "able to draw a clear line between the workplace and their personal lives, to give them time to connect with their family, friends, reduce their



Cellphones keep us connected at all times, but that can be a bad thing if that constant connection is with work.

stress levels and be able to go back to work and perform at their optimal level."

The legislation would cover private companies with more than 10 employees. There would be exemptions for certain

types of jobs that require people to be on call. Barring emergencies, bosses wouldn't be able to demand workers check work emails or messages in off hours.

Companies that violated

the rule would face fines of at least \$250 per incident.

Espinal said he was inspired by a French law that took effect this year that gave employees the right to ignore off-hour communications.

Employers who wanted to return a communication could do so.

"If you love your job and you love what you're doing, I highly doubt that you will stop working," Espinal said.

The bill would be intended to make life better for people like Arlene Pitterson, a marketing and event planning consultant in Brooklyn, who recalled one boss routinely pestering her with late-night emails, then getting upset when she didn't reply.

It was among the conditions that led her to working for herself, in which she now sets her own boundaries about when she'll

respond to people.

"The fact we have to get to a point where we have a law about it is unfortunate, but it's necessary," said Pitterson, 40.

"Technology has allowed us to work from anywhere at any time," she said. "It's now about being able to control the instruments so that we can still have a life."

The reality, though, is that the world has become a 24/7 place, and adhering to a policy like the one Espinal is proposing would be detrimental to a company's competitiveness, said labor lawyer Louis DiLorenzo of Bond, Schoeneck & King, who has spent years representing management and employers.

"The problems are going to be tremendous," DiLorenzo said. "I just don't think you can legislate against progress."

What's the best way to handle \$47K in savings?

DEAR BRUCE: I have \$47,000 in savings. What is the best thing to do with this money? I am 57 years old, self-employed, and have no other savings. Also, I own my home outright. What is the way to make this money grow in value?

-- Charles



plummet so much?

-- M.S.

DEAR CHARLES: You're not a youngster, but you're not an old man either. The only reasonable way to expect decent growth from your savings is by investing in the marketplace. That may turn your blood into ice, but that's the fact of life. There is no place else that I know of that can give you a decent return on your money. Yes, there are many other highly respectable areas where you can invest, but in my opinion, nothing else will give you significant growth.

DEAR BRUCE: My credit card utilization rate went from 3 percent to 25 percent and my credit scores dropped 20 to 30 points, even though I had four to six negative items come off my credit reports at the very same time. My question is, if the industry standard is 30 percent or less utilization, why did my score

plummet so much? First of all, I am not certain that the 30 percent is written in stone. It may well be that it is a figure produced by looking at averages or by some other method, but I don't know where that number came from. The fact that your score went down even though you had negative items removed at the same time is more or less coincidental.

I think the reason why your score went down is because of the bad items on your report, even though you paid them off.

I cannot imagine that this 30 percent standard reduced your credit score by 20 to 30 points, but even so, that's not serious damage. Your score will find its way back up if you pay your bills on time. Good luck.

Send questions to bruce@brucewilliams.com.

PROPOSED PLAN - PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD CORRECTION

US Army Corps of Engineers Former Spencer Artillery Range, Spencer, TN
Mobile District

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recently published an ad in the Southern Standard detailing a public comment review period of the Revised Proposed Plan for the former Spencer Artillery Range. The Revised Proposed Plan is currently under review and will be made available to the public at a later date. The public is encouraged to ask questions and comment on the proposed alternatives. Public comments will be considered before any action is selected and approved. A public meeting will be held during the public comment period (date, time, and location to be determined) to present an overview of the Proposed Plan. Additional information will be provided in the future when the Revised Proposed Plan has been approved and the public comment period can commence.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please call the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, at 251-690-2511

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April 13-15, 2018
Speaker: Eric Lyons
(Apologetics Press)

Schedule
Friday, April 13
7:00 PM "Confronting Cultural Confusion"
8:00 PM "Glorifying God through Consistent Christian Living"

Saturday, April 14
10:00 - 11:00 AM "Are You a Person of Integrity?" Part 1 & 2
Lunch - 12:00 PM

Sunday, April 15
9:00 AM "Retaining Reverence for God In Disrespectful Times"
10:00 AM "Pressing toward the Prize"

For more information contact
East End Church of Christ at 473-2775