

Minnesota End Wage Theft Coalition

Minnesota Legislators: Pass the Wage Theft Prevention Act (HF1391 and SF1329)

Faces of Wage Theft



“ I worked doing light industrial work for a staffing agency in Plymouth, but did not receive a last paycheck of \$400 when one assignment ended and another began. It occurred because the company misreported my hours to the staffing agency, and took several months for me to recover my money.”
— Anselmo M.

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#mnleg #endwagetheft

Wage theft is a crisis facing families across our state. It harms workers and their families, businesses, and communities throughout Minnesota. Wage theft hurts people in every industry in every corner of the state. It affects office workers, janitors, construction workers, service sector employees, and more. It occurs in many forms, including:

- Employers simply not paying workers for work performed;
- Employers not paying workers overtime pay when applicable;
- Employers shaving time off of workers' time records;
- Employers withholding money from workers' pay for expenses or other purposes without authorization.

Wage theft is real and it is a problem.

- The Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry estimates that nearly 40,000 workers are not paid an average of \$11.9 million each year.
- Only five MNDOLI employees are assigned to investigate wage claims.
- The Department has recovered over \$4.8 million for Minnesota workers over the past 5 years.
- National studies have indicated that wage theft costs American workers more than \$50 billion a year. That's more than three times the \$14 billion lost annually to robberies, burglaries, larcenies and vehicle thefts.

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“ Our paychecks bounced. 800 employees. And for a month after that they kept saying they were going to pay us; 'we're just having money troubles,' they said. The next paycheck came . . . I kept trying to deposit it because I'm in the same bank as them: No money in the account, no money in the account. The third paycheck they didn't even bother issuing. So for 45 days, we worked without pay. And about a week later, they filed for bankruptcy. Couldn't do anything. 800 employees, out a total of 1.4 million dollars.”

— Robin Pikala was one of 800 workers owed a total of \$1.4 million by Crystal Care, one of the state's largest home health care agencies.

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“ For two years, I worked in Minneapolis cleaning apartment buildings in Uptown. Then one day, they stopped paying me my wages. They kept saying they would pay me and didn't. Eventually they fired me because they said they didn't have money. Yet the owner continued cleaning that apartment building and others. After fighting for two years, I am still owed over \$4,500 in back wages. We need new kinds of enforcement that actually work for us.”
— Cecilia G.

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In Minnesota, workers are usually on their own to identify that wage theft is happening, obtain the necessary proof and document the violation, find the appropriate agency, then make a complaint and stay up to date for the months it may take to complete an investigation. The current system creates numerous barriers for workers to seek enforcement and allows for employers to get away with wage theft time and again.

The Minnesota Wage Theft Prevention Act will give the Department of Labor & Industry the tools to level the playing field. The policy and budget items will allow the Department to do smarter, more focused investigations in the industries where a minority of employers make it a practice to commit wage theft. This will provide more stability for working families, a fair market for businesses to compete, and increased revenue for the state.

Leaders of the MN End Wage Theft Coalition include: Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha, the Carpenter's Union, the Laborers Union, the Greater Minnesota Worker Center, and SEIU State Council.

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Lakeville Motor Express closed its trucking hub in Roseville, MN on Nov. 19, 2016 without any notice and has refused to pay the 95 workers for their last two weeks of work. Greg Davitt, who worked 10 overtime hours the night before the company locked the gates, has still not been paid for his last 93 hours. The workers' family health insurance was cut, even while some were still working. The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry is suing the company for \$524,000 for stealing the workers' wages.

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