

U.S. Dept. of Labor: Undertakes education and enforcement initiative to improve compliance in Green Bay-area restaurants

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GREEN BAY, WI - In an effort to inform employers and employees about federal wage laws, the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) is engaged in an education and enforcement initiative at Green Bay-area restaurants. WHD is focused on providing compliance assistance information to employers and industry stakeholders through educational outreach events, as well as conducting investigations at individual restaurants.

The initiative includes outreach to a wide variety of organizations in the Green Bay area to identify multiple channels to place information into the hands of employers and to provide them the tools they need to comply with the law. WHD is engaged with employer organizations, community organizations, and other government agencies to ensure a wide distribution of information describing requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

"These initiatives raise awareness among employers, employees, community organizations and others regarding federal wage and hour laws," said David King, Wage and Hour District Director in Minneapolis. "The ultimate goal is to increase industry-wide compliance. We want to make sure everyone knows the rules, and follows the rules."

The FLSA requires that covered, nonexempt employees be paid at least the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour for all hours worked, plus time and one-half their regular rates for hours worked beyond 40 per week. An employer of a tipped employee is required to pay no less than \$2.13 an hour in direct wages, provided that amount plus the tips received equals at least the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. If an employee's tips, combined with the employer's direct wages, do not equal the minimum wage, the employer must make up the difference. Employers also are required to provide employees notice of the FLSA tip credit provisions and to maintain accurate time and payroll records.

In the past five years, violations have resulted in more than \$2 million in minimum wage and overtime back wages found for 2,571 restaurant workers in Wisconsin. Common violations include failure to pay employees for work they perform either before or after their scheduled shifts, and failure to pay overtime for working beyond 40 hours per week.

"The Wage and Hour Division is committed to ensuring employees receive all the wages they have rightfully earned," said Ruben Rosalez, Acting Regional Administrator for the Wage and Hour Division in Chicago. "We are also determined to ensure that employers who fail to comply with the law do not gain an unfair competitive advantage over those who do. Employers can avoid wage violations by reaching out to us for assistance to ensure they are in compliance with the law."

For more information about the FLSA and other federal labor laws, call the division's toll-free helpline at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243). Information also is available at <http://www.dol.gov/whd>.