



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

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Governor Quinn Signs Bill to Increase Wage Protections for Thousands of Illinois Workers

New Law Strengthens Penalties for Unpaid Wages; Helps Workers to Recover Wages More Quickly

CHICAGO – July 30, 2010. Governor Pat Quinn today signed a bill into law to increase protections for Illinois workers who are not paid the wages they have earned. The new law amends existing state law to help thousands of Illinois workers recover unpaid wages more quickly.

“Illinois workers deserve every penny they have earned, on-time and in-full,” said Governor Quinn. “This important legislation will help Illinois workers recover unpaid wages faster and will further crack down on wage theft throughout our state.”

Senate Bill 3568 strengthens the rights of Illinois workers who have been victims of wage theft. The bill makes both first and repeat wage theft violations more serious crimes. Civil and criminal penalties for wage theft will increase under the new law, and repeat offenders can face up to three years in prison.

Workers will now be able to take alleged violations directly to the state circuit court and collect all costs and reasonable attorney’s fees. The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) will also establish a streamlined process to resolve small claims. For the first time ever, employees will be expressly allowed to file class action lawsuits against employers. Additionally, workers will be protected from retaliation for reporting alleged violations in public forums.

A recent study by the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Center for Urban Economic Development underscored the negative impact of wage theft on more than 300,000 workers in Chicago and suburban Cook County, as well as the economy overall. The study found that nearly half of the approximately 1,100 low-wage workers surveyed experienced at least one pay-related violation. The study estimates that full-time, year-round workers participating in the survey annually lost an average of \$2,595 out of total earnings of \$16,753, due to workplace violations.

In 2009, the IDOL recovered \$3.1 million in unpaid and underpaid wages and continues to provide assistance to workers for the collection of wages and final compensation that include unused vacation pay, commissions, bonuses or other fringe benefits. Under Illinois law employees must receive their final wages, vacation pay, commissions and bonuses on their next regularly scheduled pay day. Further information on the law’s requirements and penalties are available at www.state.il.us/agency/idol.

Senate Bill 3568 was sponsored by Sen. William Delgado (D-Chicago) and Rep. Elizabeth Hernandez (D-Cicero) and will take effect on Jan. 1, 2011.

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