



Employment Notes

NYS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO ENFORCE WAGE PAYMENT & OVERTIME LAWS

The New York State Department of Labor (“DOL”) has announced the formation of a new program, “New York Wage Watch,” designed to increase labor law compliance by giving non-profit groups a formal role in raising awareness of labor law obligations and reporting labor law violations.

Dubbed by the DOL as the only program of its kind in the nation, the task force will initially concentrate on illegal wage payment practices in New York City and Long Island. New York Wage Watch will focus on wage theft, which includes the payment of subminimum wages, nonpayment of wages, the failure to pay overtime, tip stealing, the failure to provide required meal and break periods and other violations of the labor law.

This new project will utilize a form of “neighborhood watch enforcement” by encouraging community groups, including unions, to foster relationships of trust with workers and to report employers’ allegedly unlawful conduct directly to the DOL. Community groups will also participate in a range of outreach activities, including holding know-your-rights training for workers, providing employers with information about compliance and distributing multilingual literature to workers and businesses. The DOL will provide materials, guidance and training to community groups participating in this program.

The implementation of New York Wage Watch reflects the DOL’s recent proactive enforcement approach, which has led to the recent recovery of hundreds of thousands of dollars in underpayments to workers. Often employers are not aware their practices violate the law. However, lack of knowledge is not a defense and employers must be vigilant in learning about and complying with their obligations under New York and federal labor laws.

This is a general summary of recent enforcement action and is not intended to be legal advice rendered in response to a specific set of facts. If you have any questions regarding wage payment obligations, overtime or other issues of employment law please contact any of the following partners in our Employment Law Group:

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