

## NEWS RELEASE

**News Release No.:** 2015-61

**Date:** July 3, 2015

### **Labor Commissioner Cites Grocery Chain El Super More Than \$180,000 for Wage Theft Violations**

**Los Angeles**—California Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su this week cited Paramount-based El Super grocery store chain for multiple wage theft violations, with assessments and penalties totaling \$180,668. The chain of 43 markets is owned and operated by Bodega Latin, Inc., with 15 locations in Los Angeles.

The investigation revealed that El Super denied rest and meal periods, and failed to pay overtime wages for 20 workers at 10 of El Super's Los Angeles markets.

"California labor laws are clear regarding rest periods and overtime requirements. Employees must be compensated for the hours they work and the benefits they earn," said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). The Labor Commissioner's Office is a division of DIR.

Investigators gathered evidence using payroll records audits and worker interviews. The evidence indicated rest and meal period violations as well as overtime premiums owed between June 17, 2012 and June 6, 2015 for all of the workers interviewed. Some employees worked an average of 55 hours per week but were paid for only 40 hours without overtime. Workers were forced to clock out for meal breaks but ordered to return to work without taking their full meal period. In some cases, workers were not allowed to take rest breaks.

Bodega Latin, Inc. was assessed \$3,557 in minimum wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages, \$44,463 in overtime wages, \$93,228 in rest period premiums, \$19,903 in meal period premiums, \$8,161 in waiting time penalties and \$7,800 in rest period penalties. Bodega must also reimburse its staff at the 10 locations \$101,084 for illegal uniform deductions documented during the audit.

"This citation is an expensive reminder to employers who are depriving workers of their hard-earned wages," said Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su.

Many of the wage violations were documented in off-site interviews with the EI Super workers.

“Workers often do not know their rights and fear losing their jobs for complaining about wage theft,” said Su. “It is important that workers exercise their labor rights by contacting us if they have been victimized by wage theft – and we can help workers to feel safe by offering off-site interviews where they can speak without their employer watching.”

The Labor Commissioner’s Office, formally known as the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, inspects workplaces for wage and hour violations, adjudicates wage claims, enforces prevailing wage rates and apprenticeship standards in public works projects, investigates retaliation and whistleblower complaints, issues licenses and registrations for businesses, and educates the public on labor laws. Updated information on [California labor laws](#) is available online.

The [Wage Theft is a Crime](#) public awareness campaign, launched last year by DIR and its Labor Commissioner’s Office, has helped inform workers of their rights. The campaign includes multilingual print and outdoor advertising as well as radio commercials on ethnic stations in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong and Tagalog.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR’s Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers’ Information line at 866-924-9757 also offers recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics.

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161 for additional details.

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The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). Non-media inquiries can contact DIR’s Communications Call Center at 1-844-LABOR-DIR (1-844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.