

## N E W S R E L E A S E

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### **Labor Commissioner's Office Cites Los Angeles Restaurant Over \$500,000 for Wage Theft**

**Los Angeles**—The Labor Commissioner's Office has cited a Los Angeles restaurant \$519,706 in wage theft violations for paying workers as little as \$4 per hour. Since 2014, 25 servers at the Shrimp Lover's Los Angeles location were paid less than the minimum wage, were not paid overtime or for meal and rest breaks and were required to work off the clock.

The Labor Commissioner's investigation found that from July of 2014 to July of 2016, workers were paid a flat rate of \$25 per shift, and a flat rate of \$30 per shift from July 16, 2016 to January of 2017. Starting in January of 2017, workers were paid the minimum wage of \$10 an hour but were required to work off the clock 30-45 minutes per shift. A shift usually lasted seven hours and workers were not paid overtime when they worked two shifts up to 14 hours a day. The Labor Commissioner's Office launched an investigation after receiving complaints from workers who reported underpaid wages to civil rights group Asian Americans Advancing Justice.

"Paying servers a daily rate below the minimum wage is a business model built on wage theft," said Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su. "This case demonstrates that when workers speak up about abuse, we will investigate and employers who rely on worker exploitation will be held accountable."

Owners Jaruwat Sonachai and Sineenart Klinmalai have been ordered to pay workers \$471,756 for underpaid minimum wage, overtime and meal and rest breaks, including \$230,156 in waiting time penalties and liquidated damages. The employer was also served with \$47,950 in civil penalties for the wage theft violations and for providing improper wage statements.

"My office benefits from community partners like Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles who have the trust of workers and can help them come forward and cooperate with our investigations," added Labor Commissioner Su.

When workers are paid less than minimum wage, they are entitled to liquidated damages that equal the amount of underpaid wages plus interest. Waiting time penalties are imposed when the employer intentionally fails to pay all wages due to the employee at the time of separation. This penalty is calculated by taking the employee's

daily rate of pay and multiplying it by the number of days the employee was not paid, up to a maximum of 30 days. The civil penalties collected will be transferred to the State's General Fund as required by law.

The Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, or the Labor Commissioner's Office, is the division within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) with wide-ranging enforcement responsibilities including adjudicating wage claims, inspecting workplaces for wage and hour violations, investigating retaliation complaints and educating the public on labor laws.

In 2014, Labor Commissioner Su launched the [Wage Theft is a Crime](#) multilingual public awareness campaign. The campaign defines wage theft and informs workers of their rights and the resources available to them to recover unpaid wages or report other labor law violations.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734).

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to subscribe to get email alerts on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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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](#). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.