

N E W S R E L E A S E

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California Labor Commissioner Cites Two Ukiah Restaurants Nearly \$2 Million for Wage Theft Violations

Santa Rosa—California Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su has fined two Ukiah restaurants over \$1.9 million for wage theft violations committed against 47 workers over a three-year period.

The co-owners, Yaowapha Ritdet and Steve Walter, are being held both individually and jointly liable for Labor Code violations found at their two establishments: WT Yupin, Inc., dba Walter Café, and Yupin, Inc., dba Ruen Tong Thai Cuisine.

“Wage theft is a very serious problem,” said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). “Not only does it affect workers who have been cheated out of hard earned pay, but the vast majority of business owners who treat their employees respectfully get undercut by this unfair and illegal practice.” The Labor Commissioner’s Office, also known as the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, is a division of DIR.

“The extraordinary amount of wages assessed at these two restaurants goes to show that if unchecked for too long, wage theft is highly detrimental to workers, and the competitive advantage gained relative to law-abiding employers is significant, harming the entire business community,” said Labor Commissioner Su.

Based on a joint investigation by the Labor Commissioner’s office and the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL), the state found that during the three year period from June 19, 2010 through June 15, 2013, workers of the two restaurants regularly worked at least 11.5 hours a day, 6 or up to 7 days a week with no meal breaks, no minimum wage for all the hours worked, and no overtime premium pay as required by law. Additionally, some of the workers were forced to sign time cards containing falsified information stating they had only worked between five and six hours each day while others were paid in cash with no information on the total hours worked, rate of pay or deductions provided.

“It’s disappointing to see workers at popular local restaurants being exploited,” said Ruben Rosalez, regional administrator in the west of the U.S. DOL’s Wage and Hour Division, which is collaborating on the case. “We value this opportunity to work with our state colleagues to fully address both the state and federal labor violations that the

servers and back-of-the-house employees at the restaurants have endured.” He added that in cases where the department finds evidence of intentional payroll falsification it may seek liquidated damages equal to the unpaid wages and may also assess penalties.

The 47 workers are due \$1,086,435.79 in unpaid minimum wage, \$376,640.31 in unpaid overtime and \$153,582.41 for no meal period premiums. In addition, a total of \$189,250 as civil penalties were assessed for violating the minimum wage and overtime laws, and for not providing workers the required wage statements, which shall contain accurate information regarding their rate of pay and hours actually worked. Labor Commissioner Su said, "We are proud of our partnership with the U.S. DOL to maximize our enforcement capabilities and appreciate their efforts in this joint investigation."

Among its wide-ranging enforcement responsibilities, the Labor Commissioner’s office inspects workplaces for wage and hour violations, adjudicates wage claims, enforces prevailing wage rates and apprenticeship standards in public works projects, investigates retaliation complaints, issues licenses and registrations for businesses and educates the public on labor laws.

The most recent information related to California labor laws is available on the DLSE [website](#) as well as on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. Employees with work-related questions or complaints may call the toll-free California Workers’ Information Line at (866) 924-9757 for recorded information, in English and Spanish.

More information on [federal labor laws and compliance assistance](#) is available online.

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