N E W S   R E L E A S E

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Labor Commissioner's Office Cites Two Towing Companies over $4.8 Million for Wage Theft Violations

Santa Ana—The Labor Commissioner's Office has cited two California towing companies in Anaheim and Oakland $4,874,661 for multiple wage theft violations affecting 187 workers including tow truck drivers, dispatchers and mechanics.

The Labor Commissioner's Office last December launched an investigation into Irvine Auto Towing, Inc. dba Pride Towing and Recovery in Anaheim, and Yaco Investments Inc. dba Stride Towing and Recovery in Oakland, after a former worker at Pride Towing filed a wage claim and reported labor law violations. Noel Yaqo and his son Aram Yaco own and operate both towing companies through their corporations, Irvine Auto Towing, Inc. and Yaco Investments Inc.

Employees generally worked 12-hour shifts with no meal or rest breaks, and some worked seven days a week. Pride Towing typically paid workers $110 per day, resulting in an underpayment of regular wages, and Stride Towing failed to pay workers for all overtime hours worked. Drivers and mechanics also incurred unlawful deductions and were charged for uniforms and for any accidents or damages incurred while working in the field.

"This is an egregious case of wage theft affecting a large group of workers who were denied a just day's pay and forced to work without meal or rest breaks," said Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su. "My office enforces California's labor laws to prevent employers from cheating workers as a means to gain an unfair advantage over their law-abiding competitors."

The Labor Commissioner's Office issued citations to Irvine Auto Towing, Inc. and Yaco Investments Inc. for violations of minimum wage, overtime and meal and rest period provisions for 129 workers at Pride Towing from June 15, 2014 to February 16, 2017, and for 58 workers at Stride Towing from August 15, 2015 to February 16, 2017. The citations include liquidated damages and waiting time penalties, as well as itemized wage statement violations. Both employers have appealed the citations.

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 fails to provide workers their final paycheck

after 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 Labor Commissioner's Office, officially known as the Department of Industrial Relations' Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, inspects workplaces for wage and hour violations, adjudicates wage claims, investigates retaliation complaints, issues licenses and registrations for businesses, enforces prevailing wage rates and apprenticeship standards in public works projects, and educates the public on labor laws.

In 2014, Labor Commissioner Julie 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 Paola Laverde 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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