

## Workers

*In a secure middle class, working families can rely on a regular paycheck for their labor and on being treated fairly in the workplace. This session we passed legislation aimed at ensuring Washington workers are safe, secure and valued.*

### Don't lose your pay over the flu

***Paid Sick and Safe Leave / [HB 1313](#)*** – Parents shouldn't have to choose between staying home to care for a sick child or putting food on the table. But for 1 million Washingtonians that is a reality. And victims of domestic violence shouldn't have to choose between going to court to take out a protection order or affording rent. HB 1313 would have allowed for all Washington employees to build some paid sick and safe leave. The bill kept an eye out for business costs with a tiered scale: for smaller companies, less leave, and for larger companies, more leave. *(Died in Senate)*



### WAGE THEFT

#### Ensuring a fair day's work equals a fair day's pay

***Addressing Wage Theft / [HBs 2331, 2332, 2333 & 2334](#)*** – This package of legislation was designed to discourage wage theft, level the playing field for honest employers, and recover state revenues lost due to the deliberate misclassification of workers as independent contractors. Every day in our state, there are workers who are not paid overtime, are fired for speaking up to protect their rights, and are denied benefits such as workers compensation and unemployment when they are misclassified. These bills aimed to provide stronger protections to prevent these unscrupulous practices by creating real consequences for these bad actors. Doing

so protects workers as well as companies that play by the rules, and brings needed revenue back to the state. The State of New York recently reported that its efforts to tackle workplace fraud in 2013 identified 24,000 workers misclassified as independent contractors, discovered more than \$333 million in unreported wages, and assessed more than \$12 million in unpaid unemployment insurance premiums. *(All died in Senate)*

### Ensuring Employers Pay Workers

***Addressing the collection of unpaid wages / [SB 5360](#) / [HB 1467](#)*** – Allows L & I to electronically serve a financial institution with a *Notice and Order to Withhold and Deliver* on an employer's account for unpaid wages. The bill strengthens the Department's ability to collect unpaid wages owed to employees. Currently, the Department uses a paper process, which is slow and inefficient. *(Delivered to Governor)*

### Expanding skills and safety training for agricultural workers

***Agricultural labor skills and safety grant program / [HB 1072](#)*** – Directs the L&I to create and administer the Agricultural Labor Skills and Safety Grant Program. The grant recipient must be a community-based organization and may receive up to \$750,000 per year to develop a program that will provide health and safety training. The grant recipient must work with agricultural employee and employer organizations to provide workforce skills and safety training to agricultural workers. *(Died in Senate)*

## **BAD BILLS**

*Last year we protected working families from severe attacks from the Senate. This session the Senate once again passed bills that would end up hurting workers – and again we ensured they didn't do any damage by stopping them in their tracks in the House.*

### **Letting Employers Avoid Paying Workers**

**"Good faith" defense for minimum wage and overtime complaints / [SB 5158](#)** – This bill would have allowed an employer to avoid paying a worker his rightful compensation if the employer in "good faith" interprets an opinion from L & I as allowing the employer to avoid paying a proper wage. *(Passed in the Senate, stopped in the House)*

### **Tempting Injured Workers with Cash Settlements**

**Amending structured settlements by lowering age barriers / [2ESSB 5127](#)** – Currently only those 55 and older can negotiate a structured settlement. SB 5127 would have removed the age threshold allowing injured workers of any age to settle parts of their worker compensation claims through structured settlements. Structured settlement buyouts are almost always a bad deal for workers, because they only save money if the workers settle for less than they are entitled to. The savings come directly from injured worker benefits. These reforms would not create jobs; instead they would shift the responsibility to tax payers at large when workers who settled for pennies on the dollar need further financial and medical assistance from the state. The current system runs well, with relatively low costs for the employer and high benefits for injured workers. The safety net should not be eroded. *(Passed in the Senate, stopped in the House)*