



## A Resolution on Increasing Penalties for Wage Theft

Resolution #2025.13

**WHEREAS**, wage theft, or the failure to pay the owed wages or monetary compensation for work continues to be a widespread and growing problem for labor in Washington State; and,

**WHEREAS**, the failure to pay minimum wages, provide adequate and legally required paid breaks, overtime pay, or final payment of checks continues to be a strong barrier for creating economic growth and success for the working class; and,

**WHEREAS**, as the cost of living continues to increase in the State of Washington the access to owed wages stands as the barrier to continuing to live and work in dignity; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industry receives thousands of wage-theft claims annually, most from low wage workers or immigrant communities; and,

**WHEREAS**, immigrant communities are facing attacks from the federal level and are losing protections nationally, Washington state has the opportunity to serve as a line of defence, offering immigrants the protections of owed wages; and,

**WHEREAS**, wage theft harms the economic community as a whole, not just the individual that is the victim and the employer. The effects of stolen wages reverberates to local economies and public revenues; and,

**WHEREAS**, current wage theft enforcement and penalties are often insufficient to deter the action, and employers may view the penalties as a cost of doing business; and,

**WHEREAS**, corporations continue to grow at record profits making the current penalties and fines insufficient; and,

**WHEREAS**, strong enforcement, penalties, and criminal consequences are essential for wage theft cases are essential to ensuring justice and access to a fair economy; now therefore, be it,

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will pursue a strategy of lobbying in Olympia for more protections against wage theft, such as increasing the financial compensation for those affected, and removal of business licenses for businesses; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will advocate for legislation which will elevate wage theft to felony status with the penalty of increased back pay, license suspension, and possible jail time for repeat offences; and be it further,

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will advocate for legislation which will increase the minimum punishment of wage theft to \$5,000 per offense, with repeat offenders facing time in prison or full suspension of business licensing and governmental assistance; and be it further,

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will pursue a strategy of pushing legislation that will provide financial remedies for those who pursue wage theft cases at their own costs; and be it further,

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will support efforts to expand the enforcement ability of the Department of Labor and Industries, empowering local governments to take investigative roles in wage theft claims, and to provide the victims with legal remedies and protections against retaliations; and be it finally,

**RESOLVED**, the Washington State Labor Council will work with unions, workers, and communities to build a coalition to raise awareness of wage theft and build a powerful alliance to hold the employers accountable.