

ATTORNEY GENERAL NICK BROWN

LABOR DAY REPORT



2025 **PROTECTING
WASHINGTON
WORKERS**



ATG.WA.GOV

Letter from Attorney General **NICK BROWN**

Dear Washingtonians,

Today we celebrate the contributions workers and organized labor make to our communities' strength, prosperity, and well-being. For my office, Labor Day is an opportunity for us to reflect on and recommit to protecting workers' rights.

Therefore, it is my honor to present the Washington State Attorney General's 7th Annual Labor Day Report, providing recommendations for promoting the dignity and rights of workers statewide.

Washington state has some of the country's strongest labor standards, including the nation's second-highest minimum wage, requirements for paid overtime for all workers (including agricultural workers), protections from pregnancy-related discrimination, and protections against retaliation.

Laws are only effective if they are robustly and consistently enforced. Recent estimates show American workers lose over \$18 billion per year through wage theft – the underpayment of earned wages by employers. This is more money than Americans lose to all forms of property theft, including robberies, burglaries, larceny theft, and motor vehicle theft combined.

I am proud of our staff's work this past year, such as partnering with community organizations on lawsuits alleging discrimination against farmworkers and filing criminal charges against two particularly egregious perpetrators of wage theft. In the coming year, our office is hoping to build on these successes and bring more attention and resources to wage theft violations.

As the federal government retreats from enforcing worker protections and creates insecurity for Washington workers, we are stepping up our efforts. I am committed to using the full power of our office to protect Washingtonians' rights at work, including advancing the recommendations in this report.

Sincerely,

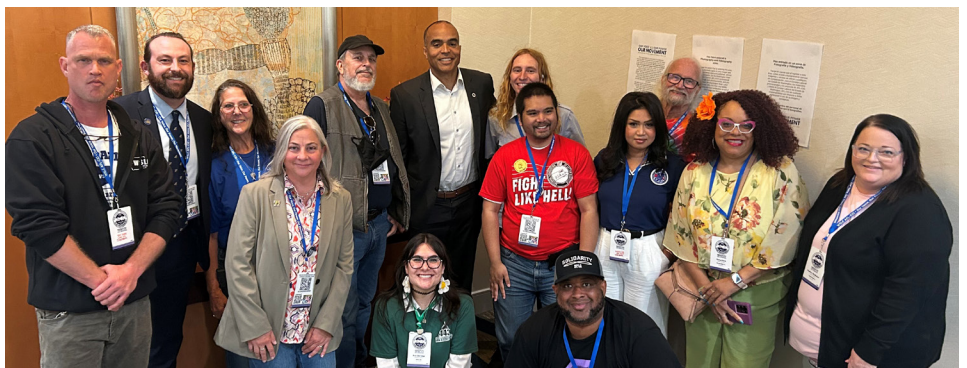


Nick Brown
Washington State Attorney General



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Actions for workers

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) supports Washington workers by developing policy to advance worker rights, fighting wage theft, protecting farmworkers, protecting pregnant and post-partum workers, defending worker mobility, defending federal employees, standing up for worker safety, and protecting Washington's unemployment trust.



Fighting Wage Theft

Ensuring For Profit Detention Centers Abide by Minimum Wage Laws

In 2017, the AGO sued the GEO Group, Inc. for failing to pay adequate wages to immigrant detainees, who are held at the Northwest ICE Processing Center (previously known as the Northwest Detention Center) in Tacoma. The GEO Group used immigration detainee labor to perform most of the work to operate the facility, paying laborers \$1 per day, or paying them only in snacks and food, instead of the minimum wage.

In 2021, a unanimous federal jury found that GEO violated the minimum wage act and the court issued an injunction, requiring GEO to comply with the law going forward. The court also determined that GEO is liable for unjust enrichment for its practice of paying immigrant detainees \$1 per day for work that they perform to keep the facility operational, awarding Washington state \$5.9 million and more than 10,000 individuals won a total of \$17.3 million in back pay. The GEO Group appealed the decision, and **in January 2025, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the decision, ordering GEO to pay the immigrant detainees their earned wages.**¹ GEO Group continues to appeal the ruling, but the AGO is committed to fight to the end to ensure immigrant detainees receive compensation they lawfully earned.



Enforcing Prevailing Wage Laws

Glacier Northwest Inc., a contractor for the Highway 99 Tunnel project, paid its workers up to \$18 below the hourly wages legally required under Washington's prevailing wage laws. In February 2025, after lengthy litigation from the AGO and the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), the company agreed to a legally binding settlement to pay back every dollar that they had underpaid. **As a result of the litigation, Glacier Northwest, Inc. paid more than \$370,000 collectively to 46 employees.**² The Court of Appeals decision also confirms the broad scope of prevailing wage protections, which will benefit other workers in the construction industry.



Holding Construction Contractors Accountable for Paying Workers

On February 26, 2025, the Attorney General filed felony theft charges, for wage theft and bounced paychecks, for unpaid worker wages, against Rodolfo Vargas, the owner of Juniors General Contractor LLC, in King County Superior Court.³ L&I referred Vargas to the AGO for criminal investigation following multiple complaints of unpaid wages from employees hired by Vargas-Velazquez and his construction business. Trial is set for October of 2025.

"Wage theft is a serious, under-addressed equity issue in King County that has rarely been investigated or referred for criminal prosecution. My office, in strong partnership with the Washington State Attorney General's Office, is working to protect workers' rights and increase accountability for those who illegally take advantage of their employees. We appreciate the investigators and criminal prosecutors at the Attorney General's office who work with us to make economic justice a priority."
- Leesa Manion, King County Prosecuting Attorney

Fighting for Workers Owed Wages from Royal India Restaurants

On May 7, 2025, the AGO filed felony theft charges against Aeisha Bhatti and Mohammad Bhatti, respectively the owner and manager of the restaurants Royal India Cuisine in Kirkland and Royal India Cuisine in Lynnwood.⁴ L&I referred Aeisha and Mohammad Bhatti to the AGO for criminal investigation following multiple wage theft complaints made by former employees at both Royal India locations, including employees being paid with checks that bounced when deposited for insufficient funds, and others being promised checks that were never received. Trial in each case is set for October of 2025.

"L&I's investigators and the AGO's expert attorneys combine to make sure Washington's rules and regulations are more than just words on paper. Our values make workplaces better for both workers and employers."
- Joel Sacks, Director of Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

Using Wage Bonds to Ensure Workers are Paid Stolen Wages

Kaeka Group, Inc. is a security services company that contracts with multiple state and local government agencies. After receiving a large number of complaints from employees alleging that Kaeka Group, Inc. did not pay them for all hours worked and did not pay their final paychecks, L&I brought legal action against the company in Superior Court. L&I required the employer to either post a \$400,000 wage bond or cease doing business in Washington state. **The action against Kaeka Group, Inc. to require a wage bond is an example of how, in partnership with the AGO, L&I is utilizing its legal authority to make sure workers get paid in accordance with state law.** Kaeka Group, Inc. did not answer or respond to the summons and complaint, so L&I obtained a default judgment against the employer in July 2025. This means that L&I will continue litigation to force the company to either obtain a wage bond as required, making sure workers are paid in accordance with state law, or to cease doing business in Washington.

Affirming L&I's Ability to Enforce Wage Theft

Cannabis Green operates three cannabis shops in Spokane. A worker filed a wage complaint with L&I alleging that Cannabis Green violated wage and hour laws, including failing to pay overtime to several employees. L&I investigated the company and found Cannabis Green violated the law for many other employees as well, including by failing to pay overtime and provide required sick leave. Working with the AGO, L&I filed a lawsuit in 2022 in Spokane County Superior Court. Cannabis Green argued that L&I has a very limited ability to bring civil wage theft suits, and the lower courts ruled in favor of Cannabis Green. L&I and AGO appealed to the Washington State Supreme Court. The Supreme Court directly and unequivocally affirmed L&I's authority and ability to bring civil wage theft suits to recover wages for affected workers, overturning an erroneous lower court decision.⁵ **This Supreme Court win ensures L&I has tools to effectively respond to complaints and enforce labor standards laws.**

Protecting Farmworkers From Discrimination

Standing Up for Washington's Farmworkers: King Fuji Ranch



The AGO Civil Rights and Consumer Protection Divisions investigated King Fuji Ranch, an apple and grape grower, for discriminatory employment practices and for misrepresentations to local farmworkers about agricultural job opportunities. The AGO asserted that hiring male H-2A workers, while firing and refusing to hire local male and female workers, constitutes sex and national origin discrimination. (H2A workers are temporary foreign agriculture workers permitted to work and live in the US when an employer cannot find enough qualified domestic workers.) The AGO also stated that the deceptive advertising to local workers requiring experience not required of H-2A workers from abroad violated the Consumer Protection Act. As a result, **King Fuji agreed to change their hiring practices and pay a \$180,000 penalty to the AGO.**⁶

"The Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's office has been a vital partner to Northwest Justice Project in securing the rights of farmworkers, including protections for victims of sexual harassment, local workers who are displaced by H-2A workers, and workers who are retaliated against for asserting their rights. The Attorney General's office is a strong ally inside of government that makes our work possible—making real the promise of Washington's workplace protections."

-Abigail Daquiz, Executive Director, Northwest Justice Project

Standing Up for Washington's Farmworkers: Cornerstone Ranches

In June, the AGO filed a civil rights lawsuit against Cornerstone Ranches alleging they discriminated against local and female farmworkers by terminating them and hiring foreign H-2A workers to replace them. The H-2A program is intended to be used for labor shortages, but Cornerstone told hundreds of local laborers that there were no jobs available and instead continued to hire all male foreign workers each season. **The lawsuit asks that Cornerstone stop its unlawful practices and provide relief for the 1,400 local workers who were harmed.**⁷

The Seattle Times

WA's 'shot across the bow' on guest workers targets Yakima-area farm

July 1, 2024, 10:00 AM | Updated July 1, 2024 | 10:00 AM



Rows of strawberry plants at Cornerstone Ranches in Yakima. Cornerstone Ranches, which owns 30 million pounds of apples and 1 million pounds of blueberries, has been accused by the state of discriminating. (From Whelan / Yakima Herald Republic, 2023) More >

Protecting Pregnant and Post-Partum Workers from Discrimination

The AGO continued advocating for pregnant and post-partum workers through its enforcement of Washington State's Healthy Starts Act, RCW 43.10.005. Since Labor Day 2024, the AGO responded to nearly 200 new intakes and obtained settlements resulting in accommodations for pregnant and post-partum workers, other injunctive relief, and over \$160,000 for harmed workers.

Protecting Pregnant Workers at Suburban Propane

The AGO sued Suburban Propane in Pierce County Superior Court in November of 2024 for violating Washington State's Healthy Starts Act and the Washington Law Against Discrimination by failing to accommodate a pregnant employee. The office alleges that Suburban Propane forced a pregnant employee to take leave that they had planned to use after having their baby, instead of offering reasonable accommodations when they could not continue to safely do their standard job duties while pregnant. **The litigation is ongoing and the AGO will continue to fight on behalf of this employee and for changes in Suburban Propane's policies regarding pregnant employees.**⁸



Defending Pregnant and Nursing Employees at Seattle Public Schools

In April, the AGO sued Seattle Public Schools, alleging that they failed to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant and nursing employees as required by law. The AGO also alleges that Seattle Public Schools retaliated against the workers who requested accommodations and pregnancy-related leave. **The AGO will continue to litigate and defend the rights of approximately 3,200 impacted workers.**⁹

Defending Worker Mobility

Standing Up Against Non-Competes

The Antitrust Division at the AGO supported the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC's) effort to pass a rule banning non-compete clauses in employment agreements. **In 2020 and 2023, Washington and a coalition of other states submitted public comments in support of the FTC's rulemaking, arguing that the FTC's proposed rule will benefit workers, promote competition, create clarity for employers, and resolve problems of disparate state-by-state approaches to non-competes.**¹⁰ In addition, in the past year, the Washington AGO joined a coalition of state attorneys general in amicus briefs defending the FTC's rule in *Properties of the Villages, Inc. v. Federal Trade Commission* and *Ryan L.L.C. v. Federal Trade Commission*. Unfortunately, the FTC has put the cases and its defense of the noncompete rule on hold. Notably, Washington's 2020 law banning certain non-compete agreements, RCW 49.62, remains in effect. The AGO will continue to fight to defend worker mobility and work to bring an end to non-competes.

Defending Federal Workers

Standing Up for Unlawfully Terminated Federal Workers

The AGO has taken several actions to challenge the Trump Administration's unjust firing of thousands of public employees. Washington has roughly 76,000 federal employees according to the state Employment Security Department (ESD). The AGO believes more than 1,000 of those employees lost their job due to the illegal actions of the President and his Department of Government Efficiency. In March, the AGO joined the American Federation of Government Employees, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Vote Vets Action Fund, the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals, and several other organizations in a lawsuit against the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and other federal agencies in an effort to stop the mass firings of probationary federal employees. A federal judge granted a preliminary injunction, reinstated the fired employees, and demanded that the agencies stop terminating probationary employees.¹¹ **However, in April, the Supreme Court stayed the preliminary injunction which allows the firings to continue as the case proceeds.**¹² In May, the AGO filed amicus briefs on behalf of a coalition of states in federal district court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals supporting a similar group of plaintiffs in a separate lawsuit challenging the administration's reorganization of the federal government, including downsizing that resulted in the mass firing of thousands of federal employees. In that case, the judge entered a preliminary injunction pausing the reorganization and large-scale reductions in force. In July, however, the Supreme Court stayed the preliminary injunction, allowing the firings and reorganization to continue while the case is litigated.

Amicus Brief in Support of Gwynne Wilcox on the National Labor Relations Board

In April, the Washington AGO joined a coalition of 23 state attorneys general in an amicus brief in opposition from Donald Trump's illegal attempt to remove Gwynne Wilcox from the NLRB. The NLRB is the federal agency that protects workers' rights to unionize, bargain, and have safe and legal working conditions. Trump attempted to dismiss Wilcox, one of the NLRB experts and board members, in the middle of her five-year term, unlawfully. Workers rely on NLRB protections and firing members of the board impacts the NLRB's ability to help workers. Removing Wilcox from the board would harm workers around the country and break federal law.¹³

Defending AmeriCorps in Washington

In April, the AGO joined a multistate lawsuit challenging the Administration's effort to terminate AmeriCorps grants and reduced the agency's workforce by 85%.¹⁴ On April 25th the federal government notified the state of Washington that it terminated nearly all of its AmeriCorps grant programs. The grants included millions of dollars to Washington and would impact roughly 1,300 corps members in the state.¹⁵ **In June, the Maryland District Court granted the plaintiff states a preliminary injunction and restored nearly \$12 million in unspent funds to Washington.**¹⁶ In another case, *National Job Corps Association et al. v. Department of Labor et al.*, the AGO filed an amicus brief, along with 21 other attorneys general, in support of the plaintiffs, opposing the termination of the program.¹⁷

Halting Illegal Firings of US Department of Health and Human Services Employees

In May, the Washington AGO joined 19 other states in a lawsuit against Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s attempt to dismantle the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Kennedy's plan included collapsing 28 agencies into 15 and firing 10,000 employees without warning. Several employees found out they had unjustly lost their job by showing up to work and learning they were locked out of the building. **In July, the states secured a preliminary injunction, which stopped Kennedy from dismantling the agency and stopped further termination of employees in HHS's most critical offices.**¹⁸

Standing Up for Worker Safety

Stopping Illegal Asbestos Exposure

The AGO's Environmental Protection Division brought criminal charges against Great North West Painting, and its owner, Bogdon Karcha, after Karcha hired day laborers instead of certified asbestos abatement workers to remove a popcorn ceiling that contained asbestos. This was a violation of the Clean Air Act and put the laborers and homeowners at risk of asbestos exposure. **Both Karcha and the company pled guilty in October 2024 to violations of the Washington Clean Air Act and the company pled guilty to reckless endangerment. In a separate civil matter, the company was fined \$134,500 by L&I for worker safety violations.**¹⁹

Holding Employers Accountable for Asbestos Exposure

Jeffrey Cockrum developed cancer after three decades working for Alcoa, a metal-processing company that deliberately exposed its employees to asbestos without safety protections. Workers' compensation rules prevent an employee from suing an employer for a workplace injury unless the injury results "from the deliberate intention of [the] employer" and it was unclear if Alcoa's actions would qualify because previously, latent diseases did not. However, Cockrum still chose to sue his employer, and the case made it to the Washington Supreme Court.²⁰ The Attorney General's Office submitted an amicus brief in support of Cockrum in the case, and the Supreme Court issued an opinion in Cockrum's favor in June of 2025. **The Supreme Court decision brought justice to Cockrum and now more employees like Cockrum can meet the "deliberate injury" exception in Washington's workers' compensation law. Employees now are able to sue their employers for latent diseases, like cancer, after a prolonged asbestos exposure.**

Urging Congress to Pass the SAFER Banking Act to Protect Cannabis Workers

Attorney General Brown signed on to a letter to Congressional leadership encouraging them to pass the SAFER Banking Act.²¹ The SAFER Banking Act would allow banks, credit unions, and savings associations to provide financial services to cannabis businesses. Currently, cannabis companies are forced to use exclusively cash and become a target for crime, which endangers workers. If enacted, the SAFER Banking Act would reduce the concerns and danger for employees and make cannabis workplaces safer.



Safety First



Protection



Regulation



Hazards



Health

Protecting Washington's Unemployment Trust

Imposter Fraud Litigation Recovery

In December, the AGO announced a settlement with Metropolitan Commercial Bank, collecting \$10 million relating to their role in contributing to unemployment benefit imposter fraud losses (people using stolen identities to get unemployment benefits from the state) during the pandemic. **This brought to \$52 million the total that the AGO recovered from banks related to the organized criminal attack and \$9 million of the settlement with Metropolitan Commercial Bank was returned to the state unemployment trust and federal treasury.** The other \$1 million covered investigative costs and future consumer protection activities. While multiple states suffered substantial unemployment benefits imposter fraud losses, Washington's Attorney General was the first and remains one of the only state attorneys general who exercised state asset forfeiture powers to recover stolen taxpayer dollars. Through the litigation efforts and other AGO assistance to the Employment Security Department, Washington was more successful than other states in mitigating unemployment benefits imposter fraud losses and leads the nation in recovering stolen funds.

Developing Policy to Advance Worker Rights

Policy Development and Analysis

Over the past year, the Attorney General's Office Policy Division has expanded capacity to analyze and develop policy on workers' rights. In addition, the AGO Policy Division has explored the intersection of labor issues with other policy areas including:

- **The Artificial Intelligence Taskforce**, which was established at the request of the Attorney General in 2024, convened a subcommittee focused on how AI impacts workers and employment. The subcommittee examines issues related to job displacement, job quality and worker well-being, opportunities to maximize augmentation and minimize displacement, and worker education and reskilling to ensure that workers can adapt to changes driven by AI and automation.
- **The Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance** identified support with employment issues as one of the most significant unmet civil legal needs statewide for Washington's veterans, service members, and their families, and is working to develop recommendations to provide additional legal support.²²

AGO's Unique Role: Advising the Department of Labor and Industries and the Employment Security Department

Inside the Attorney General's Office, the Labor and Industries (LNI) and the Licensing and Administrative Law (LAL) Divisions play a unique role in offering legal advice to their client agencies, The Department of Labor and Industries and the Employment Security Department, respectively.

The LNI Division at the AGO provides client advice support for the implementation of new labor protections L&I enforces; advises L&I during their investigations; and litigates cases for L&I in its enforcement actions, including filing affirmative lawsuits and defending challenges to new protections and standards. The AGO has assisted L&I with the implementation and enforcement of numerous new protections for workers including the equal pay and opportunities act and new protections for gig economy drivers, warehouse workers, healthcare workers, adult entertainers, isolated workers, immigrants, and minors.

The LAL Division at the AGO advises the Employment Security Department on implementing new labor laws, administering benefits, and handling the legal needs of the Department. They support the Washington Cares Long Term Care Program and helps administer the Paid Family and Medical Leave Program. Through June 2025, the State of Washington supported more than 275 million hours of paid leave to more than 652,000 Washingtonians, who received \$7 billion to avoid lost wages and enable employees to care for themselves and family members. The LAL division also advises on the implementation and process of certain programs that ESD runs. LAL advises ESD on waiving pandemic era overpayment of unemployment funds, resulting in over \$785 million being waived for Washingtonians and the implementation of a pilot program that allows transportation network company drivers to opt into Paid Family Medical Leave, resulting in over \$300,000 paid out in benefits to drivers.

"The Attorney Generals' office plays a key role in defending workers' rights in Washington state. The Washington State Labor Council represents more than 600,000 union members statewide. We count on Attorney General Nick Brown to stand up for public employees, fight wage theft, and defend our civil rights"

– **April Sims, President,**
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO.



WSLC Secretary Treasurer Cherika Carter, AG Nick Brown, WSLC President April Sims

Wage Theft in Washington & U.S. DOL'S Backsliding in Worker Protections

Workers throughout our state experience wage theft. This can mean that workers are paid less than the legal minimum wage, prevented from taking lunches or mandatory breaks, misclassified as an independent contractor when they are a full-time employee, have tips withheld, do not receive overtime pay, or are not paid at all. **Regardless of the method of wage theft, the outcome is the same: workers lose their rightfully earned wages.**

Wage theft disproportionately impacts women, immigrants, and people of color in Washington state.²³ In fiscal year 2024, more than 6,500 workers filed wage theft complaints with L&I.²⁴ We also know that people all over the state do not report wage theft because they don't know their legal rights, fear retaliation, or don't trust that government will be able to help them.²⁵

Mandatory arbitration clauses (contract terms where employees waive their right to sue in court as a condition of work) are increasingly being used in employment agreements. These terms are often buried in legalese and workers must either accept the agreement as written or reject the job. As of 2021, more than half of non-union private sector employers include mandatory arbitration in employment contracts and at least 60 million workers are not able to bring class action lawsuits to protect their workplace rights. The only option for these workers is individual arbitration, where they are less likely to prevail, tend to receive smaller settlements, have no appeal rights, and where the outcome only impacts that worker and doesn't generally lead to systemic changes by the employer.²⁶



In previous years, L&I, the AGO, and the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) all worked in tandem to enforce labor laws in Washington State. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has abandoned its enforcement priorities when it comes to labor and worker protection. U.S. DOL, which historically has overseen federal wage and hour laws, worker safety issues, and employee benefits protection programs, has pivoted its priorities and decreased enforcement since January of 2025. The President issued executive orders that reduce U.S. DOL's ability to enforce wage and hour laws, discrimination in the workplace, and workplace safety laws. Since Trump took office, roughly 20% of U.S. DOL employees have resigned or accepted a buyout option presented by the federal government. The President also proposed a 35% cut to U.S. DOL's budget for FY 2026.²⁷ Washington workers can no longer rely on the federal government's protection while Trump is president. Instead, the state must step up and protect workers more than it has ever before.

"We deeply appreciate AG Brown's commitment to protecting Washingtonians at work. Low-wage workers depend on public enforcement of their rights; it is expensive and time consuming for these workers to file a private lawsuit. As the Trump administration has stopped enforcing minimum workplace standards, Washington must step up and fill the enforcement gap left by the departure of the Department of Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, and others. We encourage AG Brown to continue his work expanding protections to vulnerable workers."

- Jeremiah Miller, Legal Director, Fair Work Center

Recommendations For Future Action

Launch a Dedicated Strategic Labor Enforcement Unit within the Attorney General's Office

In partnership with existing state and local labor standards enforcement entities like L&I and the City of Seattle Office of Labor Standards, the AGO should dedicate additional capacity in a unit focused on strategic enforcement of Washington state's labor standards and worker protections. This is particularly timely given that the U.S. DOL, which has historically been one of the primary enforcers of labor standards, is retreating from proactive wage theft enforcement, and workers are less likely to pursue remedies with U.S. DOL due to fears about immigration enforcement.²⁸

Washington will join twelve other state attorneys general with dedicated worker protection units. Across the country, state attorneys general bring lawsuits combatting wage theft and worker misclassification, take action to protect immigrant and other vulnerable workers, challenge unfair employment practices like non-compete agreements, and champion pro-worker state policies.²⁹ There are opportunities for increased collaboration and impact working in partnership across state lines with the units in these other offices. It is time for Washington state to join this group and ensure our enforcement efforts match the strength of our labor standards.

Partner with L&I to Improve Existing Enforcement Processes

L&I is the primary state agency charged with enforcing Washington's labor standards laws, including the Minimum Wage Act, Paid Safe and Sick Leave, Prevailing Wage, and Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA). L&I responds to thousands of worker complaints each year and operates a small Proactive Investigations and Enforcement Unit (PIEU) that focuses on company-wide investigations.

The AGO should collaborate with L&I, community partners and the Legislature to improve the process of responding to wage complaints and increasing recoveries for Washington workers. The AGO and L&I should collaborate to evaluate their statutes and internal practices, to see how they can best work to support workers and enforce worker protection laws.

Pass the Immigrant Worker Protection Act

Federal U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is increasingly using workplace raids as a tool to enforce federal immigration laws. These raids are extremely disruptive for employers, immigrant workers and their families, undermine community safety, and harm our state's economy.

Unannounced workplace raids are often preceded by an announced I-9 inspection, which is a records review by immigration officials to verify I-9 forms for all employees.³⁰ For an I-9 inspection, ICE is required to notify employers through a Notice of Inspection (NOI) 72 hours in advance of the inspection.³¹ Some states, including California, Oregon and Illinois, require employers to provide similar notice to employees when an I-9 inspection is planned.

Washington state should enact similar legislation requiring employers to provide notice to their employees when they receive notice of an I-9 inspection. This legislation would give workers the opportunity to work with their employer to ensure their documentation is in order, speak to an attorney in advance, or make a plan with their family.

Protect Washington Workers from Attacks from the Trump Administration

The AGO is actively working with other state attorneys general offices to monitor, and, when appropriate, challenge actions by the Trump Administration that impact Washingtonians. Monitoring and responding to executive orders, rulemaking by the U.S. DOL and other federal agencies, and other federal actions should continue to be a priority for Washington state leaders.

State leaders also need to be prepared to respond if Washington workers lose additional federal protections. For example, the lack of a quorum and ability for effective action by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) means that private sector workers across the country are at risk of losing the ability to address unfair labor practices and resolve disputes related to union organizing and collective bargaining. Washington legislators should follow the lead of legislators in New York, California, and Massachusetts in exploring options to allow state government to oversee private labor relations if the Trump Administration abandons its responsibilities to protect workers.

Resources for workers: changes to state labor laws

Below is a list of some significant changes to state labor laws passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2025.

Preventing Employee Coercion Based on Immigration Status (SSB 5104, Sen. Bob Hasegawa)

This bill, which went into effect on July 1, 2025, protects employees from employers who threaten them based on their immigration status in furtherance of violating the wage payment act and other related laws. Workers who face coercive behavior from employers can file complaints with the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). L&I is required to investigate and may issue civil penalties for violations.

Providing Paid Sick Leave for Immigration Proceedings (SHB 1875, Rep. Osman Salahuddin)

This bill, which went into effect on July 27, 2025, allows employees to use their paid sick leave to prepare for, or participate in, immigration proceedings.

Providing Enforcement for Isolated Worker Protections (2SHB 1524, Rep. Edwin Obras)

The Washington Law Against Discrimination imposes workplace requirements for employers of isolated employees, including any janitors, security guards, hotel or motel housekeepers, and room service attendants, who spend a majority of their working hours alone. The existing requirements include the adoption of a sexual harassment policy, mandatory training about such protections, access to resources about these topics, and the provision of a panic button. This bill expanded these protections and gave enforcement authority to L&I to cite violations with monetary penalties.

Ensuring Workers Have Access to Own Personnel Records (SHB 1308, Rep. Julia Reed)

This bill, which went into effect on July 27, 2025, requires private employers to provide current and former employees a copy of their personnel file within 21 days of request. It also gives employees a private right of action as a mechanism to enforce the law.

Collective Bargaining for Agricultural Cannabis Workers (ESHB 1141, Rep. Lillian Ortiz-Self)

This bill, which went into effect on July 27, 2025, allows the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) to administer and enforce collective bargaining agreements for cannabis workers who cultivate, grow, harvest, or produce cannabis. Agricultural cannabis workers were previously excluded from collective bargaining because they are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act.³²

Providing Access to Unemployment Benefits for Striking Workers (ESSB 5041, Sen. Marcus Riccelli)

This bill, taking effect January 1, 2026, levels the playing field for workers fighting for fair wages and working conditions by allowing workers to receive up to six weeks of unemployment insurance benefits while on a labor strike or lockout. Benefits would begin 15 to 21 days from the start of the strike. Washington state joins New Jersey and New York in this important reform to the state's unemployment insurance program.³³

Ensuring Fair Wages for Workers in High-Hazard Facilities (SHB 1173, Rep. Dan Bronoske)

This bill, effective January 1, 2026, requires that workers in the building and construction trades working for contractors at refineries and petrochemical manufacturing facilities be paid the correct wage for their job classification, addressing a lack of clarity in the law that resulted in workers in very dangerous jobs not having been properly compensated.³⁴

Strengthening Investigations of Workplace Violence in Healthcare Settings (2SHB 1162, Rep. Mari Leavitt)

This bill, effective January 1, 2026, updates existing requirements related to workplace violence in healthcare including requiring healthcare settings to conduct timely investigations of workplace violence incidents and annually update their workplace violence prevention plans. This will be enforced by L&I.

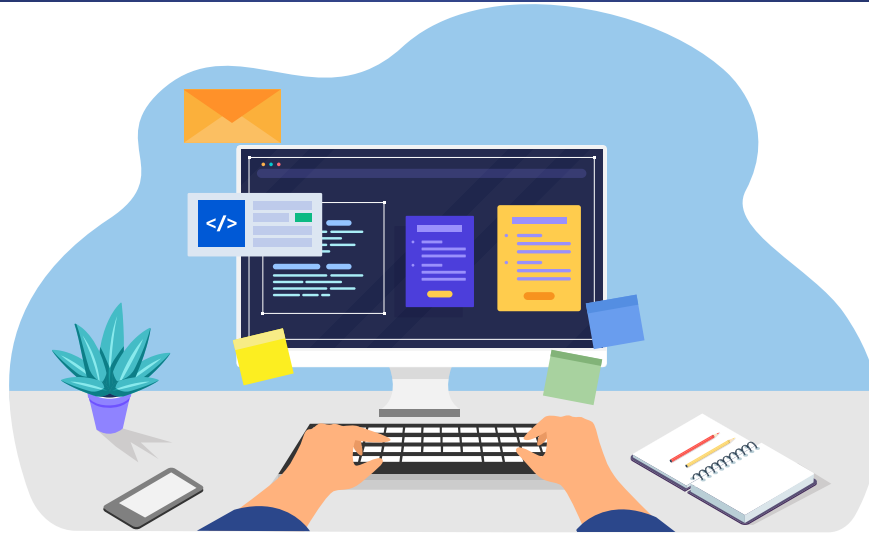
Expansion of State Paid Family and Medical Leave Program (E2SHB 1213, Rep. Liz Berry)

This bill, taking effect January 1, 2026, expands employment protection in the Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Program to include any employee who began work with their employer at least 180 days before their leave, as opposed to the previous twelve months initially required.³⁵ The PFML Program's employment protection also used to apply to employers with over fifty employees, and over the next three years will decrease to a threshold of eight employees. This change is expected to significantly expand the the rights of workers under the state Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Expanding Certain Pregnancy Accommodations and Shifting Enforcement to State Labor and Industries Department (2SSB 5217, Sen T'wina Nobles)

This bill, taking effect January 1, 2027, expands Washington's pregnancy accommodation law (the Healthy Starts Act), by broadening the definition of reasonable accommodation to include scheduling flexibility for postpartum visits, and covering employers with one or more employees. This bill also shifts enforcement of the Healthy Starts Act from the AGO to L&I.

Resources For Workers: How To File A Workplace Complaint



If you believe your employer is not following current labor laws, or you have not received wages that you are owed, there are options to get help:

1. Contact the AGO through the [General Consumer Complaint Form](#)
2. File a [Workplace Rights Complaint](#) or [Report a Safety Hazard Online](#) with L&I.
3. Environmental crimes often have an impact on worker health and safety. To report an environmental crime, use the AGO [Environmental Crime Report Form](#).
4. Individuals who believe they have been victims of employment discrimination can file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission at https://wahum.my.site.com/FileaComplaintOnline/s/?language=en_US or can contact the AGO Civil Rights Division at civilrights@atg.wa.gov.
5. Workers wishing to report violations of Washington's non-compete law may reach out to the Attorney General's Antitrust Division at monopoly@atg.wa.gov.

Some local governments can also respond to complaints against employers in their jurisdiction:

1. If you work in Seattle, you can [File a Complaint](#) with the Seattle Office of Labor Standards.
2. If you work in Tukwila and think you are experiencing a violation of the Tukwila Labor Standards Law, you can file a [File a Complaint](#) with the Tukwila City Attorney.
3. If you work in SeaTac and think you are experiencing a violation of the SeaTac Minimum Employment Standards Ordinance for Hospitality and Transportation Industry Employers, you can [File a Complaint](#) with the City of SeaTac.

Finally, there are nonprofit and legal advocacy groups who also offer support to workers whose rights may have been violated:

1. If you believe you have experienced wage and hour violations anywhere in the state, you can reach out to the [Fair Work Center](#).
2. The [Seattle University Workers' Rights Clinic](#) offers free legal consultations between September 1 and April 1 to workers who earn less than \$70,000 per year.
3. If you are a low wage worker who has experienced wage theft, you can contact [Washington Wage Claim Project](#).
4. You can seek a private attorney through the [Washington Employment Lawyers Association](#).

In Washington State it is illegal for an employer to take retaliatory action against you for exercising your rights as an employee and filing a complaint. This includes reducing hours, reducing pay, taking disciplinary actions, firing the employee, or threatening to take action based on an employee or their family member's immigration status. If you believe your employer has retaliated against you for exercising your rights, please fill out one of these forms and mail it to the address listed: [Minimum Wage Act Retaliation Complaint Form](#) or the [Safety and Health Retaliation Complaint](#).

The AGO, L&I, and the Seattle Office of Labor Standards work to protect all workers, regardless of immigration status. None of these resources will ask about your immigration status.

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