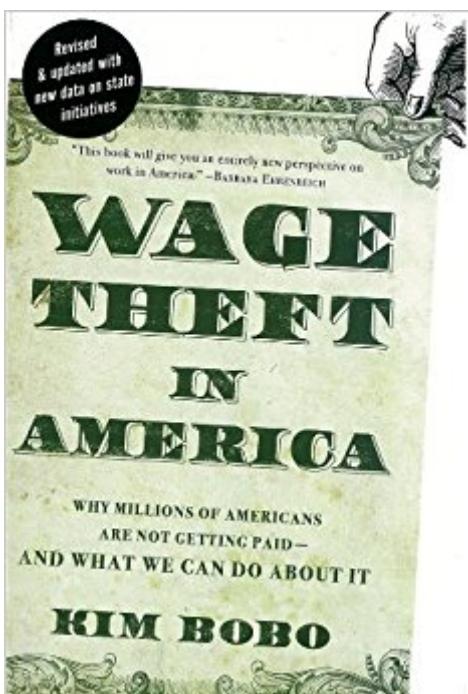


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Wage Theft In America: Why Millions Of Working Americans Are Not Getting Paid—And What We Can Do About It



Synopsis

In what has been described as "the crime wave no one talks about," billions of dollars worth of wages are stolen from millions of workers in the United States every year—a "grand theft that exceeds every other larceny category. Even the Economic Policy Foundation, a business-funded think tank, has estimated that companies annually steal an incredible \$19 billion in unpaid overtime. The scope of these abuses is staggering, but activists, unions, and policymakers—along with everyday Americans in congregations and towns across the country—have begun to take notice. While the first edition of *Wage Theft in America* documented the scope of the problem, this new edition adds the latest research on wage theft and tells what community, religious, and labor activists are now doing to address the crisis—from passing state and local wage-theft bills to establishing mayoral task forces and tapping agencies that help low-wage workers in spotting wage theft. Offering a sweeping analysis of the crisis, citing hard-hitting statistics and heartbreakingly first-person accounts of exploitation at the hands of employers, this new and updated edition of *Wage Theft in America* offers concrete solutions and a roadmap for putting an end to this insidious practice.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: The New Press; Revised Edition edition (September 13, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1595587179

ISBN-13: 978-1595587176

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars—See all reviews (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #351,282 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #81 in Books > Law > Specialties > Labor Law #294 in Books > Business & Money > Economics > Labor & Industrial Relations #296 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Labor & Industrial Relations

Customer Reviews

Wages are the easiest place for businesses to cut costs. Other overhead - taxes, utilities, materials - provide very little leeway, but wages are an agreement between the employer and the employee. The employee sells his labor for the promise of future payment, and if the employer fails to live up to

that promise, the fear of job loss - of no longer having a ready market for his labor - trumps any leverage the employee might have. The Fair Labor Standards Act recently celebrated its 75th anniversary as the federal requirement that employers pay a minimum hourly wage and time and one-half for overtime, but abuse is rampant and widespread. Employers who would never dream of evading taxes or Social Security, think nothing of cheating employees out of their required wages, probably because of the fluidity of the relationship. If the employee agrees to work unrecorded and unpaid hours, and he is informed in advance that he will be paid his straight time rate for overtime hours, then it doesn't seem as serious a violation as submitting a fake expense receipt to the IRS. Of course, they are equivalent; both are laws of Congress. The author catalogs numerous instances of wage theft in various industries. "Wage theft" is a brilliant term, bringing this act to a personal scale, more so than "violation" or "noncompliance," which imply an infraction of bureaucratic rules. An employer who does not pay his employees properly is certainly breaking the rules, but there is a human cost as well, which "wage theft" takes into account. One solution is increased enforcement. Bobo compares the ratio of federal Wage and Hour investigators to the working population, and notes that the ratio was highest in the 1940s, shortly after the law's passage.

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