

More than \$1.5 billion in stolen wages recovered for workers between 2021 and 2023

Summary: More than \$1.5 billion in stolen wages were recovered for workers between 2021 and 2023 thanks to federal, state, and local efforts to combat wage theft.

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epi.org/292809

Key findings

- Every year, millions of workers across the country are victims of the scourge of wage theft—meaning these workers are not paid the full wages to which they are legally entitled.
- Nearly \$700 million in stolen wages were recovered for workers by the U.S. Department of Labor from 2021 to 2023.
- A total of \$201.4 million were recovered by state departments of labor and attorneys general over those three years.
- The top 10 wage and hour class action settlements amounted to \$641.3 million for workers in 2021.

Why this matters

Wage theft is pervasive across all industries and income levels in the country, but workers who can least afford to bear the cost of lost earnings—particularly low-wage workers—are disproportionately vulnerable to wage violations.

How to fix it

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels should redouble their efforts to combat wage theft, including by strengthening worker protections against wage theft; bolstering enforcement capacities; and increasing penalties for perpetrators.

Any worker can experience wage theft, but workers in low-wage industries are more likely to experience such violations.