

**Oregon Interfaith Letter to the Oregon Legislature**  
***A Call for Action on the Problem of Wage Theft***

February 11, 2013

Dear Oregon Legislator,

As Oregon faith leaders and members of Oregon's diverse faith communities, we are deeply concerned about wage theft in our state. We write to urge you to support legislation in 2013 that will hold employers, employment agencies, and labor brokers accountable for wage theft violations, and that will help all workers get paid the wages they have earned.

Wage theft, the underpayment or nonpayment of wages earned, not only violates the law, it transgresses basic moral principles. Jewish and Christian scripture are unequivocal: "Thou shalt not steal." From Deuteronomy 24:15, we read: "You must pay out the wages due on the same day, before the sun sets, for the worker is needy and urgently depends on it." And the Prophet Muhammad was clear: "Pay the worker while the sweat is still wet upon their brow."

During a recent five-year period, Oregon workers filed over 8,500 wage claims for \$24.5 million in unpaid wages with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), according to research conducted by the Oregon Center for Public Policy. Such complaints represent only a fraction of all violations. Many workers whose wages are stolen stay silent. They fear employer retaliation, do not know where to turn, or have little hope that anything can be done.

In Woodburn, for example, a group of sixteen workers received almost no pay for two months of grueling painting and cleaning work. Their stolen wages are estimated to total almost \$80,000, but their direct employer has disappeared without compensating them.

While wage theft is common across many industries, it disproportionately affects low-wage workers – those most likely to be living paycheck to paycheck. And, wage theft does not just affect the workers whose wages are stolen. It corrodes the health and wellbeing of our communities and society as a whole.

We give thanks for employers who act with justice and fairness toward their workers. Their good citizenship is undermined when competing employers are allowed to violate the law without being held accountable.

We urge you to take action to address wage theft in 2013. Our shared religious, ethical, and legal principles require nothing less.

Thank you for your work on these difficult issues.

Sincerely,

Leaders and members of Oregon faith communities

### **Organizations & Congregations:**

Adelante Mujeres  
Ainsworth United Church of Christ, Portland  
Bend First Presbyterian, Bend  
Bridgeport United Church of Christ, Portland  
Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland  
Diamond Law, Portland  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
Havurah Shalom, Portland  
FAST (Fight Against Slavery/Trafficking and Fight Against Sex Trafficking)  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Oregon Center for Christian Voices  
Oregon New Sanctuary Movement  
P'nai Or of Portland  
Portland Jobs with Justice Faith Labor Committee  
SisterSpirit, Portland  
St. Andre Bessette Catholic Church, Portland  
St. Philip Neri, Peace and Justice Commission, Portland  
St. Philip the Deacon, Portland  
VOZ Workers Rights Education Project  
Zion United Church of Christ, Sandy  
18th Ave Peace House, Portland

### **Individuals:\***

Rev. Denise Andersen, Clergy, Clackamas UCC, Milwaukie  
Rev. Sue Ayer, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Washington County, Beaverton  
Rev. Dave Bean, Methodist Federation for Social Action, West Linn  
Stacy Bellavia, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Portland  
Lowen Berman, Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ), Portland  
Joyce Berney, Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, Portland  
Dan and Janet Blair, Lostine Presbyterian Church, Lostine  
Sarah Bosserman, Catholic, Clackamas  
Thomas Brenneman, Retired Teacher, Mennonite Church, Canby  
Daniel A. Brown, St. Philip Neri Catholic Church, Peace and Justice Commission, Portland  
Jennifer Brownell, Sr. Pastor, Hillsdale Community Church UCC, Beaverton  
Eric Canon, Chair, Interfaith Committee on Homelessness, Forest Grove  
Mira Conklin, Coordinator, Oregon New Sanctuary Movement, Portland  
Bridget Cooke, Executive Director, Adelante Mujeres, Forest Grove  
Rev. Chuck Currie, Minister, Sunnyside Church and University Park Church, Portland

Gary L. Davis, Executive Director, Operation Nightwatch, Lake Oswego  
Rev. Janine DeLaunay, Aloha United Methodist Church, Aloha  
Linda L. Fenner, Lake Oswego  
Don Frueh, Pastor, Parkrose Community United Church of Christ, Portland  
Cynthia Gaddis, Portland  
Reverend (Retired) Donnamae Grannemann, Hood River Valley Christian Church, The Dalles  
Kay Haberlach, FSO, Clackamas  
Andy Harris, MD, Board Vice-Chair, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Portland  
Michelle Harvey, Portland  
Debra A. Headley, Friends, Newberg  
Susi Hukari, Springfield  
Ben R. Innes, OFM, Pastor, Ascension Catholic Church, Portland  
Thomas Karwaki, Chair, Pastoral Council, St Andrew Catholic Church, Portland  
Vicki Kerr, Catholic, Union  
Reverend Elizabeth A. Ketcham, Unitarian Universalism, Gearhart  
Rabbi Debra Kolodny, P'nai Or of Portland, Portland  
The Rev. Janet Kozak, Good Shepherd and St. Mark's, Madras  
Rev. Robert Krueger, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Portland  
The Rev. Gabriel Lamazares, Assistant Rector, St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal, Portland  
Gary Langenwalter, Pastor, Dundee United Methodist Church, McMinnville  
Kevin Mallon, Wilsonville  
Don Manghelli, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Tigard  
Michael Marciano, Portland  
Robert M. Marvos, Quaker/INCO – Interfaith Network of Central Oregon, Bend  
Joanne McClarty, Member of ONSM, Journey Koinonia Catholic Community, Portland  
Dorothy Mellon, St. Philip Benizi Catholic Church, Beavercreek  
Tim Merrill, St. Philip Neri Catholic Church, Portland  
Reverend Carol Miller, First Christian Church, Medford  
Kathie Minden, Gresham  
Mary Montesano, St. Mary's, Corvallis  
David Montesano, Catholic, Corvallis  
The Rev. James Mosier, Rector, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Ontario  
William W. Murray, Member of OFWM, Albany  
Kathleen Myers, Teacher, Portland  
Rev. Bobbi Neason, First Presbyterian Church, Bandon  
The Rev. Kurt Neilson, Rector, Saints Peter and Paul Episcopal Church, Portland  
Karen Nettler, Board Chair, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Happy Valley  
Rev. Steve Newton, CSC, Pastor, St. Andre Bessette Catholic Church, Portland  
John Nichols, Salem  
Carlos E. Nunez, Priest, Episcopal Church, Portland  
Laura M. Ohanian, Eugene

Rev. Jennie Ott, Pastor, Lake Oswego United Church of Christ, Lake Oswego  
Martha Perez, Portland  
Michael E. Peterson, Trinity U.M.C., Eugene  
Lois and John Petke, Piedmont Presbyterian Church, Portland  
Janice Place, First Covenant Church, Portland  
Ernie Pruitt, Beaverton  
Naomi Pusch, Member, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Portland  
Rhonda Radomski, Voz, Portland  
Sandy Ramirez, Havurah Shalom, Portland  
David Randall-Bodman, Pastor, Bethel Congregational UCC, Beaverton  
Josefina Riggs, Latino Community Outreach, Volunteer, Rural Organizing Project, Redmond  
Brian Robak, Lake Oswego  
Martin Rose, Portland  
Arielle Rosenberg, Rabbinical Student, Hebrew College, Portland  
Dr. Mary Ryan-Hotchkiss, St. Pius X Parish, Portland  
Sabino Sardineta, Assistant Director, Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, Beaverton  
Elizabeth Schwartz, Havurah Shalom, Portland  
John T. Schwiebert, Portland  
Rev. Stuart R. Shaw, United Methodist Church, Salem  
Rev. William Sinkford, Senior Minister, First Unitarian Church, Portland  
Bonnie Sloat, Tigard  
Reverend Marcia Stanard, Wy'east Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Portland  
Sean Staub, Portland  
Jessica Stewart, Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Portland  
Sister Mary Sullivan, SNJM, The Dalles  
Shoshon Tama-Sweet, Oregon Community, Portland  
Wynne Wakkila, Executive Director, FAST (Fight Against Slavery/Trafficking and Fight Against Sex Trafficking), Bull Mountain  
Joe Walicki, Beaverton  
Dr. David L. Wheeler, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Portland, Portland  
Janet Whitney, Coordinator, Peace and Justice Team, Bend First Presbyterian, Bend  
Rev. Tara Wilkins, Pastor, Bridgeport United Church of Christ, Portland  
Kent Willocks, Valley Covenant Church, Eugene  
Rabbi Joseph Wolf, Havurah Shalom, Portland  
Rev. David Zegar, Pastor, St. Andrew Catholic Church, Portland

\* Organizations listed for identification purposes only.