

**December 14, 2010**

## **Stunning Win for Workers Across New York State!**

**By Make the Road New York Staff / Make the Road New York**



On December 13, Governor Paterson signed into law the historic *Wage Theft Prevention Act (WTPA)*, **landmark legislation that will significantly increase penalties and improve enforcement of the New York State laws protecting workers from wage theft.**

Sadly, Wage Theft is rampant in New York - in NYC alone, unscrupulous employers steal more than \$18.4 million a week, almost **\$1 billion each year**, from their workers by cheating them out of the minimum wages and overtime benefits they are due. Penalties for this all-too-common practice have been so low that there is a perverse incentive to steal your workers' wages - it costs less, even if you eventually get caught, than paying people what is required by law. Law-abiding businesses are put at a disadvantage when their competitors are reducing costs by stealing workers' pay.

The *Wage Theft Prevention Act* will change that by increasing penalties, increasing protection for workers who speak up, and adding tools that the Department of Labor and Courts can use to investigate cases and actually collect the money that workers are owed. MRNY drafted the WTPA, and led a strong community-labor coalition to pass the bill. (Read more in the [NY Times](#), [NY Daily News](#), [Village Voice](#), and see below for list of key allies who helped make this victory a reality.)

Workers, like MRNY member Luis Olivo, who worked at the Fine Fare supermarket in the Bronx for more than seven years as a bagger - for more than thirteen hours a day, six days a week for pocket change and tips - will now have the law behind them when they stand up for their dignity and demand that their employers follow the law. Read more about Luis' story in the [Daily News](#).



Luis Olivo testified at the City Council hearing on Wage Theft. "We worked extremely hard to pass this law. Now employers will think twice before stealing their workers' wages."

**MRNY wants to thank all of the hard-working friends and allies without whom this victory would not have been possible:** State Senator Diane Savino, Assemblyman Carl Heastie, UFCW Local 1500, and the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) formed the core of our steering committee. But the strength of this coalition was also the breadth of organizations driving and supporting the work:

- **Labor allies** like the Working Families Party, SEIU Local 32BJ, the New York State AFL-CIO, New York Hotel & Motel Trades Council, 1199 SEIU, the Laborers International Union, and the Mason Tenders PAC.
- **Community partners and advocates** like New York Communities for Change, the Drum Major Institute, NYCOSH, New York Jobs with Justice/Urban Agenda, Hispanic Federation and the NYS Stimulus Alliance.
- **New York City leaders** like City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Council Members Melissa Mark-Viverito, Brad Lander, and Margaret Chin.
- **NYS Senators** Jose Peralta, Toby Ann Stavisky, John Sampson and Martin Dilan.
- **NYS Assembly Members** Hakeem Jeffries, Rory Lancman, Jeffrion Aubry, Brian Kavanagh, Cathy Nolan, Richard Gottfried and Speaker Sheldon Silver.
- **Wage and hour experts** at the National Employment Law Project, New York State Trial Lawyers Association, Outten and Golden LLP, Urban Justice Center-Community Development Project, Workers Rights Law Center, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, MFY Legal Services, Inc., and the Legal Aid Society.
- **Business leaders** like those at Morton Williams Supermarkets and Small Business United.