

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Workers Gain Protection from Unscrupulous Employers

Governor Signs Steinberg Legislation to Safeguard Immigrant Workers from Threats, Intimidation

(Sacramento, CA) – Employers could jeopardize their business licenses and face hefty fines if they threaten workers based on immigration status under a bill that has been signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown. The measure by Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg, Senate Bill 666, passed the Legislature overwhelmingly with bipartisan support.

[SB 666](#) makes it illegal to report or threaten to report workers' immigration or citizenship status, or that of their family, in retaliation of an employee filing a complaint of unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment, or otherwise attempting to exercise his or her rights in the workplace. Under the new law, employers and businesses found in violation could be subject to civil penalties up to \$10,000 per incident, and with business license suspension or revocation under certain conditions.

“This is another tremendous victory for civil rights. Workers deserve fairness and safe conditions when they go to their jobs every day without the fear of retaliation when they stand up for their rights. Our labor laws are supposed to protect all California workers, regardless of their immigration status,” said Steinberg (D-Sacramento). “When

employers use threats and intimidation like this, the voice of workers is silenced and law-abiding businesses face unfair competition. This law will ensure justice.”

In many cases, employers ignore immigration status when hiring employees but then use threats of deportation when workers stand up for themselves. This measure makes it clear that such threats are adverse actions under law. It also clarifies that an employer cannot retaliate against an employee who makes a written or oral complaint regarding unpaid wages, adding a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 for violations of California Labor Code Section 98.6

“There are many, many good employers in the state of California and I’ve dealt with many of them, but unfortunately there are employers who don’t follow the laws,” said Michael Marsh, of California Rural legal Assistance, Inc. “There are people every day who come into our office with valid claims (and) with valid complaints. Their rights have been violated and yet they’re afraid ... Even when they’re told that they have these protections they don’t want to pursue these claims because they fear deportation. This is a persistent problem and I think it really needs to be addressed.”

SB 666 will now become law in California on January 1, 2014.
