

California Labor Federation  
National Employment Law Project  
Teamsters Joint Council 7

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CONTACT: Steve Smith, California Labor Federation, [ssmith@calaborfed.org](mailto:ssmith@calaborfed.org), (510) 326-4644  
Emma Stieglitz, National Employment Law Project, [emmaS@berlinrosen.com](mailto:emmaS@berlinrosen.com), (646) 200-5307  
Doug Bloch, Teamsters Joint Council 7, [doug@teamjc7.org](mailto:doug@teamjc7.org), 510-333-1179

## California Legislature Passes Historic Laws Protecting Immigrant Workers from Abusive Employers

### *New Laws Would Protect Immigrant Workers from Retaliation*

Sacramento, CA— The California State legislature has passed new protections designed to stop unscrupulous employers from retaliating against immigrant workers who stand up for their rights. The bills await signature by Governor Jerry Brown.

The California Labor Federation sponsored a package of three bills to protect workers regardless of immigration status. AB 263 (Assemblyman Roger Hernandez) and SB 666 (Senator Darrell Steinberg) will help us enforce basic labor laws by prohibiting employers from using immigration-related threats when workers speak out about unfair working conditions. AB 524 (Assemblyman Kevin Mullin) makes it clear that making immigration threats in order to get away with wage theft may constitute criminal extortion.

“Employers should be on notice that with these bills, retaliating against workers who stand up for their basic rights will have serious consequences,” said **Art Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation**. “These new protections are vital to protecting all workers who are afraid to report these abuses. As long as unscrupulous employers can exploit low-wage immigrant workers with impunity, all workers suffer.”

The extent of the retaliation against immigrant workers was documented in a [recent report](#) by the National Employment Law Project, a co-sponsor of these bills.

“For too long, employers have used the threat of deportation to silence workers who are victims of stolen wages, unsafe working conditions, and abuse on the job,” said **Eunice Cho, an attorney at the National Employment Law Project**. “Immigrant workers are more likely to suffer from abuses such as wage theft and work in low-wage industries. We celebrate the legislature’s support for protecting the rights of some of the most vulnerable workers in the state.”

"These laws will protect workers like me who try to speak out and then face retaliation," said Gerardo Aguirre, a former employee at Marquez Brothers, a food manufacturing company, who was one of several workers fired while standing up for their rights. "The workers at Marquez Brothers are united in standing up to intimidation, at work and in the State legislature. We need laws that allow all workers to speak up and protect immigrant workers from these kinds of abuses."

California has a strong history of protecting the rights of immigrant workers. In 2002, California passed SB 1818, which clarified that immigration status is irrelevant for purposes of enforcing state labor and employment laws.

More than fifty community organizations, representing civil rights, immigrant rights, and labor rights, are supporting this bill package. The bills now head to Governor Jerry Brown, who has until October 13th to sign it into law. “We applaud the State Senate and Assembly for passing these important bills,” said Pulaski. “We urge Governor Brown to sign this bill and protect the rights of all workers.”

*The [California Labor Federation](#) is made up of more than 1,200 [AFL-CIO](#) and [Change to Win](#) unions, representing 2.1 million union members in manufacturing, retail, construction, hospitality, public sector, health care, entertainment and other industries.*

*The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org).*

*[Teamsters Joint Council 7](#) represents 100,000 working men and women in 22 local unions in Northern California, the Central Valley, and Northern Nevada. The Teamsters are the largest organization of immigrant food chain workers in California, with 25,000 members in food processing, packaging, harvesting, and distribution.*