



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor & Industries

Press Release

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CONTACT: Bob Estabrook, 503-709-0730

Wage Security Fund Covers Unpaid Wages at Select Onion

More than \$242,000 in worker pay to help sustain local economy

ONTARIO, OR- Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is paying out nearly a quarter-million dollars from the state's Wage Security Fund to cover the final wages of employees from Ontario-based Select Onion, which has filed for bankruptcy. In recent weeks, BOLI's Wage and Hour Division has processed 237 claims for unpaid wages from former employees of the onion growing and processing operation—one of the broadest uses of the fund in its 27-year history. Oregon is the only state in the country with such a fund, and this work represents just one way that the dedicated staff at BOLI provide a direct benefit to Oregonians in their greatest time of need.

“Our first priority is taking care of the workers,” said Brad Avakian, Oregon's Commissioner of Labor and Industries and chief of BOLI. “We can pursue repayment to the Wage Security Fund if Select Onion or a successor has the resources to pay, but while we're dealing with the legal issues, we don't want Oregon workers left holding the bag.”

BOLI is processing payments to all 237 former employees from the Wage Security Fund, an account dedicated to covering final wages for employees when a business ceases operating and lacks the resources to cover final paychecks. The pay-outs thus far total \$242,981.22, or an average of about \$1,030 per claimant. Most claims were for wages covering approximately one month, between March 19 through April 15, and the total in payments would represent almost one percent of total monthly payroll in Malheur County.

“During my four years as Labor and Industries Commissioner, we've put more than \$3.1 million in wage security money in the hands of Oregonians who would have been out of luck otherwise,” Avakian noted. “It is vital to our state's economic health that workers can be confident that they'll be paid for their work, even if their employer can't make good on their own.”

Additional information about Oregon's Wage Security Fund is available online. Visit www.oregon.gov/BOLI for more information about the fund and all of BOLI's work to protect workers' rights in Oregon.

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