



Groundbreaking Coffee Shop Union Uncovers Wage Theft

California coffee shop workers discover years of wage and hour violations after being laid off in retaliation for unionizing

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(Redlands, CA) — A union formed by workers at the Augie’s Coffee chain in California, one of the few unions in an almost entirely non-union industry, has uncovered years of violations of wage, hour, and break time laws.

“During the years that I worked in the warehouse I would often work 8 hours straight without having the chance to take a lunch break — which it turns out is illegal,” said six-year employee Kelley Bader. “I trusted [Augie’s owners] the Amento’s and it’s startling to realize that laying us all off wasn’t the first time they were breaking the law.”

“During the pandemic there were weeks when I was working 10 days straight or more without overtime compensation or appropriate breaks,” said Katie Walsh, an employee from Redlands. “It’s really upsetting that we worked so hard to keep Augie’s afloat during the pandemic and they repaid us by violating overtime laws and then laying us all off.”

Yesterday, workers filed 18 individual wage theft claims averaging over \$7,000 per worker with the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. These claims detail over \$140,000 in violations committed by Augie’s Coffee over the last three years. Additional claims are expected in the coming days and weeks.

Augie’s Coffee workers demanded recognition of their union on June 26, and Augie’s owners Andy and Austin Amento responded by laying off all 54 workers on July 4. Workers have filed charges at the National Labor Relations Board, charging that the mass termination was in retaliation for joining a union. Those charges are currently under investigation.

To coordinate an interview with an Augie’s worker please contact Anna Rose at 802-377-9379. Photos available upon request.