



National Employment Law Project

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California Domestic Workers Win Historic Fight

Senate Passes Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, Awaits Gov. Jerry Brown's Signature

Statement of Christine Owens, Executive Director, National Employment Law Project:

The National Employment Law Project applauds the California State Senate for its vote last night to pass AB 241, the California Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. This important bill would extend crucial overtime protections to nearly 200,000 domestic workers—protections enjoyed by most other workers in California. We urge Gov. Brown to sign the bill into law to ensure caregivers, nannies, and other domestic workers get the protection and respect they deserve.

Industry standards for domestic workers and the families who rely on them are long overdue. California has long regulated working conditions in private households, but has excluded domestic workers who care for children, elders, and people with disabilities from many basic protections. This historic exclusion is based on long-outdated notions that these workers, primarily immigrant women and often women of color, were not doing “real work” and had no need to earn real wages to support themselves and their families.

The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights would go a long way towards correcting this unequal treatment by providing overtime pay after nine hours a day and 45 hours a week to all domestic workers currently excluded from this protection. The bill would be an important step toward finally recognizing that the domestic industry, like other industries, requires basic labor standards to ensure that workers are treated fairly.

The bill's passage is the result of years of organizing by groups representing domestic workers, women, labor and immigrants. This broad coalition renewed its efforts after Gov. Brown vetoed an earlier version of the Bill of Rights last year. If Gov. Brown signs AB 241 into law, California will become the third state to enact a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights. New York passed the first ever Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in August 2010 and Hawaii passed a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in July. Domestic workers and their allies are organizing to pass similar bills in Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington, Oregon, and Connecticut. Other states have recently eliminated or narrowed exclusions for domestic workers as part of broader efforts to win across-the-board increases in the state minimum wage rate.

NELP urges Gov. Brown to sign the California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights and add California to the growing list of states that have recently moved to raise standards for this vital workforce.

NELP will continue to support domestic worker groups in California and around the country to improve and enforce workplace protections for these essential workers.

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 information, visit www.nelp.org.

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