

March 30, 2009

An Open Letter To Our Union Brothers and Sisters and to Our Colleagues Throughout the United States Department of Labor

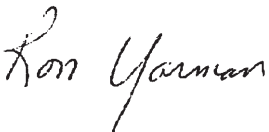
Last week the Government Accountability Office – the investigative arm of the United States Congress – issued a report to the Committee on Education and Labor in which they allege widespread breakdowns in the complaint intake process of the Wage and Hour Division. As is the nature of such reporting, the investigative observations and the agency's conclusions are merely the beginning of a larger examination of Wage and Hour's handling of the complaint process. Objective observers will withhold judgment until all of the facts are out and the appropriate rebuttal has been made. In the meantime, we look forward to a constructive conversation on the needs of the Division following years of diminished staffing and inadequate resources.

The GAO report raises many more questions than answers. We think it would be naive to accept their version of the "facts" on their face and it is most certainly unfair to judge the performance of individuals without closer examination. The real work of the Wage and Hour Division does not normally include the screening of fictitious complaints by fictional employees and the insincere promises of fictional employers. Wage and Hour investigators and frontline staff are highly trained and among the most dedicated employees in the U.S. Department of Labor. Yet it comes as no surprise to our union that the agency would experience systemic breakdown following years of neglect.

Since the inception of the WHISARD system, Wage and Hour employees have expressed concern over its shortcomings as a means to measure and track performance. The GAO has rightly focused on the limits of this management system. In addition, during her brief tenure Secretary Solis has already made plans for the hiring of some 250 investigators – an increase of more than 30% for these frontline workers. We applaud this initiative and look forward to working with her to revitalize this important mission.

We welcome the scrutiny of the failed policies of the previous Administration and are hopeful that the Wage and Hour Division will secure the necessary funding to repair or replace inadequate systems. The union will not stand idly by and allow our employees to become scapegoats for simply working with the limited resources they have been given. Finally, we thank all of our colleagues in the sister agencies for their support. The GAO report is the first word on this subject – not the last.

In Solidarity,



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