

News Release

WHD News Release: [04/01/2010]

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Release Number: 10-0411-NAT

US Labor Secretary sends message to America's under-paid and under-protected: 'We Can Help!'

Solis announces national campaign and commits to bringing justice to nation's working poor

CHICAGO — Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis today used the historic setting of Chicago's famed Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, on the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois, to unveil the U.S. Department of Labor's "We Can Help" campaign. Solis committed to helping the nation's low-wage and vulnerable workers, and reminded them that her agency's personnel will not waver in protecting the rights guaranteed by law to every worker in America.

"I'm here to tell you that your president, your secretary of labor and this department will not allow anyone to be denied his or her rightful pay — especially when so many in our nation are working long, hard and often dangerous hours," Secretary Solis told an energized crowd of workers, community advocates and leaders. "We can help, and we will help. If you work in this country, you are protected by our laws. And you can count on the U.S. Department of Labor to see to it that those protections work for you."

Today's event marked the beginning of the "We Can Help" nationwide campaign. The effort, which is being spearheaded by the department's Wage and Hour Division, will help connect America's most vulnerable and low-wage workers with the broad array of services offered by the Department of Labor. The campaign will place a special focus on reaching employees in such industries as construction, janitorial work, hotel/motel services, food services and home health care. It also will address such topics as rights in the workplace and how to file a complaint with the Wage and Hour Division to recover wages owed.

Through the use of Spanish/English bilingual public service announcements — featuring activist Dolores Huerta and actors Jimmy Smits and Esai Morales, the launch of a new Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/wecanhelp> and a toll-free hotline, 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243), the department is renewing its emphasis on reaching and assisting workers who often find themselves denied the pay legally guaranteed to them by law. The campaign also underscores that wage and hour laws apply to all workers in the United States, regardless of immigration status.

"The nation's laws are for the protection of everyone who works in this country," said Secretary Solis, speaking from the site where President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Labor Secretary Frances Perkins once worked. "It is appropriate and correct that vulnerable workers receive what the law promises, and that no employer gain a marketplace advantage by using threats or coercion to cheat workers from their rightful wages. I have added more than 250 new field investigators nationwide — an increase of a third — to help in this effort. If you are a worker in America, on this day, we promise you a new beginning and a new partnership to ensure you receive the wages you deserve."

Chicago's Hull-House opened in 1889 when Jane Addams, the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, rented the site to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises to improve conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago. By its second year of existence, Hull-House was host to 2,000 people every week and today remains a central force in reaching out to Chicago's poor.

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