

Hispanic Affairs Project



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For Immediate Release

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Shepherds Allege that the U.S. Department of Labor Set their Minimum Wage Illegally Low

Denver, September 16, 2015: The Hispanic Affairs Project (HAP) has filed a lawsuit alleging that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) sets an illegal wage floor for shepherders in the H-2A visa program. The current wage floor for most H-2A shepherders is \$750 per month, which translates to between \$2 and \$3 per hour. This wage floor is not only shockingly low, HAP also believes it is illegal. HAP's complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado, explains that in calculating the wage floor, the DOL failed to follow regulations that require it to act annually and to rely on survey data from workers that is statistically valid and up-to-date. HAP requested that the Court immediately stop further importation of foreign shepherders at this illegally low wage rate.

"The shepherders who are part of my organization are suffering every day because of the low wages in the industry," said Ricardo Perez, Executive Director of the Hispanic Affairs Project. "The Department of Labor should be doing much more to prevent these workers from living in poverty and squalor."

"The shepherding industry pays some of the lowest wages in the country," said Towards Justice Executive Director Nina DiSalvo, an attorney representing HAP. "The Department of Labor has turned a blind eye to worker suffering while violating its own regulations in such a way as to drive nearly all U.S. workers out of the shepherding industry and allow despicably low wages for H-2A shepherders."

The case is Hispanic Affairs Project et al. v. Perez et al., case number 1:15-cv-01785, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

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