

No rest for weary, but for some, overtime pay (maybe)

Department of Labor regulations taking effect on December 1 exposed a dirty little secret of the nonprofit sector.

By [Rebekah Basinger](#)

November 22, 2016

Throughout much of late 2015 and into early 2016, the U.S. nonprofit sector was abuzz over the Department of Labor's updates to federal overtime regulations. Online chatter died down during the heat of the presidential campaign, but attempts to circumvent the new rules continued. A cottage industry of sorts has sprung up as consultants and associations trot out strategies for mitigating the anticipated impact of the changes that take effect on December 1.

To refresh your memory, the update states that employees earning less than \$913 per week (\$47,500 annually) will be entitled to overtime compensation, regardless of whether they are currently classified as executive, administrative, or professional (white-collar) workers. This is welcome news for the millions of employees who may now see larger paychecks. Nonprofit employers, however, don't see the coming change that way.

The proposed regulations on overtime pay expose a dirty little secret of the nonprofit sector. And no, it isn't that much of the nonprofit labor force is underpaid and overworked. Or that mission success too often comes at the expense of staff members' financial and personal well-being.

Rather, the secret is this: despite talk of wishing they could do more for the folks in the trenches, nonprofit leaders, including in faith-based settings, are willing to fight, lobby, and finagle to maintain the status quo.

Don't get me wrong. I understand that shoe-horning overtime pay into already maxed-out budgets won't be easy. However, as a writer for the [Nonprofit Quarterly](#) warns, "if exploiting your lowest paid workers is absolutely key to your enterprise

model it may be that that model needs some rethinking.” All the more so if your organization does business in God’s name.

Organizational rhetoric touting justice and shalom for all rings hollow if not applied to staff as surely as to those served by an organization. There’s nothing just in exploiting the generosity of good-hearted staff for whom the work is as much a calling as it is a job. “Don’t muzzle the ox that is treading grain,” scripture warns. “Workers deserves their pay,” the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to Timothy.

The call to address pay structures presents a salt and light opportunity for faith-based organizations. If organizational leaders push back against fear-filled rhetoric and courageously do right by lower-paid employees, this could be a breakthrough event for the Christian community.

December 1 is just around the corner. Boards and CEOs of ministry organizations can join the shout of “Impossible!” or choose instead to enact with a smile the Department of Labor’s ruling on overtime pay. My prayer is for the latter.

Wouldn’t that be something? Wouldn’t that be a witness?

Originally posted at [Generous Matters](#)