

SUBJECT: Directing the comptroller to prepare a statewide report on wage theft

COMMITTEE: Business and Industry — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 4 ayes — Oliveira, Collier, Fletcher, Romero

1 nay — Rinaldi

2 absent — Simmons, Villalba

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Laura Rosen, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Kelley Shannon, Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas; Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; Donnis Baggett, Texas Press Association; Jennifer Allmon, The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Maxie Gallardo, Workers Defense Project)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Dana Vajgert, Texas Workforce Commission)

DIGEST: HB 1715 would direct the comptroller of public accounts, in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission, to prepare a report on wage theft by Texas employers. The report would be required to include:

- the demographic groups and industries that are most affected by wage theft;
- an analysis of the economic impact of wage theft on employees and its effect on competition within an industry;
- state and federal remedies available to victims of wage theft;
- difficulties in pursuing remedies under state and federal law; and
- recommendations for legislation to address the difficulties in pursuing remedies.

By December 1, 2016, the comptroller would be required to provide a

copy of the report to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the House speaker, and each standing committee of the Senate and House with primary jurisdiction over matters relating to labor and employment.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2015, and would expire on June 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1715 would help identify ways to protect vulnerable workers from wage theft. Wage theft disproportionately affects women, immigrants, minorities, and low-wage workers. This bill would direct the comptroller simply to look for ways that the Legislature could protect workers across the state from being treated unfairly by an employer. The bill would not create any new programs or requirements, and the cost of conducting the study could be absorbed by the comptroller and the workforce commission's current budget.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1715 would create an avenue for mandates and regulations that would impose an additional burden on labor and industry. The bill would require the comptroller to provide recommendations for future legislation, which could create unwarranted disruption of current practices and impose more bureaucracy on Texas companies.