

Televangelist Duped Workers Out of \$388K, Judge Says

Televangelist Ernest Angley has been ordered to pay \$388,000 in back wages to his employees who were forced to volunteer at his Cathedral Buffet restaurant in Ohio.

The Labor Department reports the restaurant violated minimum wage, overtime and child labor laws.

Angley founded and pastors Grace Cathedral with locations in Cuyahoga Falls and Akron, Ohio. His televangelism ministry hosts crusades, television and radio programs and prints tracts to distribute around the world.

He also owns Cathedral Buffet, which is the source of the judge's ruling.

The Labor Department claims that in the buffet:

- Defendants improperly treated certain workers as "volunteers" and paid them no wages. These "volunteers" worked in the buffet restaurant cooking, cleaning, waiting on tables, stocking and maintaining the buffet line and as cashiers.
- Two dining-room attendants, aged 14 and 15, worked in violation of the restricted hours for minors.
- Defendants paid four managers weekly salaries that were too low to meet the federal minimum wage, currently \$ per hour, and did not pay overtime after 40 hours. The employer incorrectly categorized these managers as exempt from minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act, though they did not meet the criteria. The managers are due a total of \$8,684 in back wages for overtime violations.
- Two hundred thirty-nine employees, including four of the managers, did not earn the minimum wage of \$ per hour

and are due a total of \$207,975 in back wages.

- The employer failed to maintain accurate records.

“In his announcements, Reverend Angley would suggest that church members had an obligation to provide their labor to the buffet, in service to God, and that a failure to offer their labor to the buffet—or to refuse to respond to phone calls ... seeking volunteers—would be the same as failing God,” one former worker wrote.

Angley says his buffet operators did nothing wrong. His attorney, Lawrence Bach, tells that Angley and the restaurant may appeal the judge’s decision. {eoa}