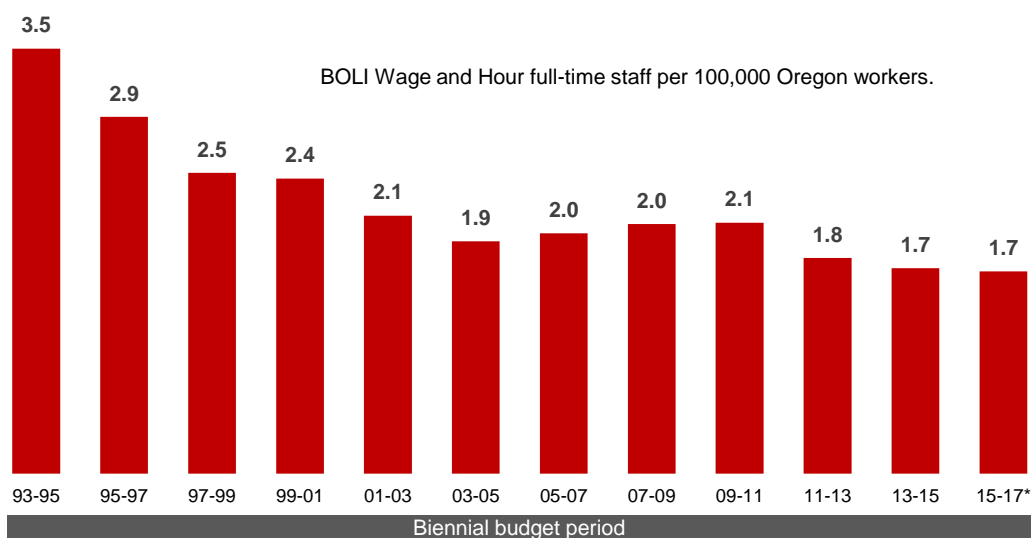


Memorandum

To: Michael Dale, Northwest Workers Justice Project
From: Janet Bauer, Policy Analyst
Re: Oregon's Capacity to Fight Wage Theft
Date: January 12, 2016

Oregon's capacity to protect workers from wage theft has been eroding for decades. Building adequate capacity would require a large investment of state resources.

The state has less than half the firepower to defend workers it had decades ago, as the following graph shows.



* Projected employment for fiscal year 2015-17.
OCPP analysis of Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry, Oregon Office of Economic Analysis and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Although the data on BOLI staffing is only available back to 1993-95, that period probably was not the high-water mark for state wage enforcement. For instance, budget cuts enacted before 1993-95 had already ended Wage and Hour activities in the Pendleton field office.

Even the 1993-95 funding level was insufficient to the task. In 1981, a BOLI spokesperson affirmed to the Oregon Legislature that the BOLI commissioner “would love to have the resources to fully enforce all our laws.”¹

A shrinking field office presence makes in-person agency assistance harder to get. Over the last 25 years or so, offices in Pendleton, Bend and Medford have closed. Today, only offices in Portland, Salem and Eugene remain that provide in-person help.

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Building sufficient capacity would require a large budget investment. The 2015-17 Wage and Hour Division budget is \$8.1 million. To restore the 1993-95 staffing levels relative to Oregon's workforce would require an estimated additional \$9 million.

¹ Testimony of Bruce Hugo, Senate Committee on Labor, 1981 Session of the Legislative Assembly, Tape 22B at 277-302, February 18, 1981.