

Labor Law Violations Reshape Urban Labor Markets

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Contact

Susan Lehman, 212-998-6746

Annette Bernhardt, 212-998-6338

Jonathan Rosen, 646-452-5637

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Brennan Center Releases *Unregulated Work In the Global City: Employment and Labor Law Violations in New York City*

This week, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law released [Unregulated Work in the Global City](#), a report which documents for the first time how violations of minimum wage, overtime and other workplace laws are changing the shape of urban labor markets in the 21st century.

Based on three years of research and hundreds of interviews with employers, workers, government agencies, and community groups, [Unregulated Work](#) makes plain the need to enact and enforce more effective labor laws that protect all workers in our economy.

Unregulated Work provides an eye-opening look into what the authors call a world "that lies outside the experience and imagination of many

Americans." It is a world in which jobs pay less than the minimum wage, and sometimes nothing at all; where employers do not pay overtime for 60-hour weeks; where vital health and safety regulations are routinely ignored; and where workers are retaliated against for speaking up or trying to organize.

"These practices are no longer confined to small firms at the fringes of the economy," said Dr. Annette Bernhardt, Deputy Director of the Justice Program at the Brennan Center. "Instead, workplace violations are threatening to become a distinct business strategy in low-wage industries, even among larger employers."

The report profiles 13 major sectors where violations are most common, and identifies the types of laws that employers violate, the business strategies that result in violations, and the workers who are most affected. The 13 industries are: grocery stores & supermarkets, retail, restaurants, building maintenance & security, publicly-subsidized child care, domestic work, home health care, residential construction, food & apparel manufacturing, laundry & dry cleaning, taxis & dollar vans, auto repair shops and personal services such as nail and beauty salons.

Unregulated Work also provides an in-depth analysis of the economic trends and public policies that have contributed to the problem, and outlines three components of a strong reform agenda to renew the promise of workplace protections:

- Strengthen the government's enforcement of employment and law laws
- Update legal standards for the modern workplace
- Establish equal status for immigrants in the workplace

Co-authored by Siobhan McGrath and James DeFilippis, the report focuses on New York City, but the conditions it describes exist throughout the American economy.