

To avoid potentially costly fines, employers must regularly review their policies and practices to make sure they comply with the multitude of federal, state, and local laws. Employers overlooking compliance (intentionally or unintentionally) could find themselves facing dire consequences. The Department of Labor's (DOL's) Wage and Hour Division conducted nearly 14,000 outreach events to get their message to employees in the past five years and 3,200 in 2017 alone. Numerous employers were affected by governmental initiatives and investigations that uncovered noncompliant practices. Here is a recap for 2017:

- The Wage and Hour Division obtained nearly \$270 million in back wages for approximately 240,000 workers throughout the US for minimum wage, overtime, and other wage violations.
- The Massachusetts Attorney General reported they recovered nearly \$8.7 million in restitution and penalties from Bay State-based employers.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) awarded \$484 million for victims of workplace discrimination.
- The EEOC received 25,605 sex-related discrimination claims, and that number is expected to rise in 2018.
- More than 84,250 discrimination charges and 41,097 retaliation charges were filed with the EEOC.
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) audits fell after 2013, when we saw a high of 3,127 audits conducted that year. However, in 2017, we saw that number rise back up to 1,360, with ICE intending to increase that number by 5 times, projecting nearly 7,000 audits for 2018.

### In the news

**LinkedIn Corporation** agreed to pay \$3,346,195 in overtime back wages and \$2,509,646 in liquidated damages to 359 former and current employees. The DOL's Wage and Hour Division found that LinkedIn was in violation of the overtime and record-keeping provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**Zenefits** co-founder and former CEO Parker Conrad was forced to resign, and he and Zenefits were fined nearly \$1 million by the US Securities and Exchange Commission as part of a settlement over charges that they had misled investors due to lack of compliance practices.

A **Chipotle** employee in Washington, D.C. was awarded over half a million dollars in a discrimination settlement in August 2016. A former employee alleged that after telling a supervisor that she was pregnant, he harassed and ultimately fired her, violating the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which is part of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### What can employers do?

Many small- to mid-sized businesses face the daunting task of administering human resources. Often, these duties are spread among several people within the organization. Following the legal requirements and maintaining compliance with various rules and regulations can be costly and confusing. However, the cost of not complying can be great — either in the form of fines and penalties, or legal settlements. [Contact HR Knowledge](#) to learn how we can help you assess the current state of your human resources function.