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WORKER RIGHTS · OHIO

Know Your Rights in Ohio

What every hospitality worker should know, in plain language. No legal jargon.

Read this first — Ohio's minimum wage is written into its constitution. It rises with inflation every January 1, and no legislature can quietly freeze it. Almost everything else workers assume is state law is not: Ohio has no final-pay statute, no break law for adults, no paid sick leave, and no paid family leave. The strongest posting rules in the state are not Ohio's at all — they are Columbus's and Cleveland's, and they bind employers city by city. This guide says plainly which is which.

General information only — not legal advice.
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The Basics: A Constitutional Minimum Wage

- Ohio's minimum wage is $11.00 an hour in 2026. It sits in the state constitution (Article II, §34a) and is indexed to the CPI-W — it adjusts every January 1.
- $11.40 an hour is announced for January 1, 2027.
- The state rate applies at businesses with gross receipts over $405,000 a year. Smaller businesses owe at least the federal minimum of $7.25 — and so do employers of workers under 16. In 2027 the receipts threshold rises to $419,000.
- Ohio law bars cities from setting their own minimum wages. The constitutional rate is the only local number there is.

Tips

- If you customarily receive more than $30 a month in tips, your employer may pay a cash wage of not less than HALF the minimum wage: $5.50 an hour in 2026, and $5.70 in 2027.
- The constitution puts the burden on the EMPLOYER to demonstrate that your tips plus your wages actually reach the full minimum wage. If they do not, the employer owes you the difference.

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Your Paycheck

- Ohio's wage-payment statute (ORC 4113.15) is semimonthly: work in the first half of a month must be paid by the 1st of the next month, and work in the second half by the 15th.

Final pay, stated plainly: Ohio's statute has NO separate final-pay deadline, and no fired-versus-quit distinction. Your last wages ride the same semimonthly schedule as every other paycheck — whatever some summaries claim.

- If wages sit unpaid 30 days past the payday with no genuine dispute, the employer owes liquidated damages of 6% of the claim or $200, whichever is greater.

Overtime

- Overtime pays 1.5 times your regular rate after 40 hours in a week (ORC 4111.03), following the federal exemptions.
- Two carve-outs workers miss: the state overtime law does not cover businesses under $150,000 in annual gross volume, and it excludes agriculture. For those workers, the question is federal coverage.

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Breaks

- Ohio law mandates a break for ONE group only: workers under 18 get a 30-minute rest period after 5 consecutive hours of work (ORC 4109.07(C)).
- For adults there is no state meal- or rest-break mandate. Federal rules and your employer's own policy govern — so get the policy in writing.

Sick Leave and Family Leave

- There is NO statewide paid sick leave in Ohio. By statute (ORC 4113.85), sick pay is a fringe benefit set exclusively by your employer's policy, your contract, or a collective bargaining agreement, unless a law expressly provides it.
- Ohio has NO paid family and medical leave program. The federal FMLA's unpaid, job-protected leave is the leave law that applies.

Non-Competes

- Ohio has no enacted ban on non-compete agreements — not a general one, and not one for any sector. Whether a non-compete can be enforced against you is a common-law question the courts decide case by case.
- Bills for a general ban (SB 11) and a health-care restriction (SB 301) have been introduced in the legislature. They are proposals, not law — do not let anyone tell you otherwise in either direction.

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Columbus: Pay Transparency

- Columbus's pay-transparency law (Chapter 2335) covers employers with 15 or more employees in Columbus — including job placement and referral agencies.
- It bans salary-history inquiries: an employer may not ask about your pay history, screen you by it, or rely on it alone.
- It requires a reasonable salary range or scale in job postings (§ 2335.03(C)). If a Columbus posting shows no range, that is the employer's problem, not yours.
- Complaints go to the Columbus Community Relations Commission.

Cleveland: Pay Transparency

- Cleveland's law (Chapter 669, effective October 27, 2025) likewise bans salary-history use and requires salary ranges in formal job postings at employers with 15 or more employees.
- Employers get a 90-day cure period. Penalties run up to $1,000 for a first violation and $5,000 for repeat violations.
- Complaints must be filed within 180 days.

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If Something Goes Wrong

- Minimum-wage complaints go to the Bureau of Wage & Hour Administration, Ohio Department of Commerce, in Reynoldsburg: 614-644-2239.
- Or sue: a civil action recovers your back wages plus twice again in damages. Retaliation for claiming is penalized at a minimum of $150 a day. The window is 3 years — or the later of when the violation stopped, or one year after a final state disposition.
- Discrimination: file a charge with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission — in writing, under oath, within TWO YEARS. Since 2021, you must file the OCRC charge and receive a right-to-sue notice before bringing a damages lawsuit (ORC 4112.052).

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