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Washington Wage-and-Hour Lawsuits Are Surging

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In an article in the *Spokane Journal of Business*' September 24 issue, [John Nelson](#) explains why a wave of class-action wage-and-hour lawsuits is hitting Washington employers. Many of the suits allege violations of the state's meal and rest break rules, and policies once thought compliant no longer protect employers.

Filings have climbed sharply, with King County alone reporting about 250 class-action wage-and-hour lawsuits in the 12 months From July 2025 - June 2026. Most of these complaints follow a predictable pattern. Plaintiffs have contingent-fee representation, while employers pay for their own defense and risk covering the other side's attorney fees, so settlement is often the only rational choice. Once back pay, overtime, 12% interest, possible double damages and attorney fees are added in, the financial exposure grows quickly.

Washington courts have also held that simply allowing employees to take breaks isn't enough, and that employers must make sure those breaks actually happen. For that reason, John urges businesses to put a system in place that can prove compliance before a lawsuit is ever filed.

"It's important to get a sophisticated review of your policies and practices, then make an earnest investment in potential 'suit-proofing' measures. It only takes one former employee to represent the class, and plaintiff's lawyers are out looking for them now," John writes.

Read the full article on the [Spokane Journal of Business website](#).

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