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HEADLINE: Wage-theft law clears committee The city proposal would make cheating day laborers out of their pay a prosecutable offense. The full City Council will consider it in two weeks.

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BODY:

Day laborers cheated out of wages will be able to call the police if a proposal that sailed through a City Council committee Wednesday gets the same stamp of approval by the entire council in two weeks.

City Councilman Doug Linkhart's proposed ordinance would add wage theft to a list of prosecutable thefts and give day laborers recourse when they are cheated.

"We are hoping a notice from police to the employer would take care of most of the cases," Linkhart told the committee, made up of council members. "We are hoping not to get to the point of going to court or having anyone prosecuted."

The proposal will go to the mayor/council meeting Monday and to the full council Nov. 28. Linkhart is confident he'll get council support. Eight council members heard the proposal Wednesday.

Councilwoman Judy Montero, who is not on the committee, was there in support.

"I support basic worker rights," she said. "If they work the hours, they should get paid."

The ordinance would protect all workers, but it is day laborers who most often get ripped off and feel they have no legal remedy, advocates say.

Criticism is coming from illegal-immigrant opponents, but advocates of the proposal and Linkhart say this ordinance is not about citizenship status. The focus is on wage theft, no matter who is ripped off, Linkhart said.

For the Worker's Rights Task Force, the approval in committee was a giant first step.

"It's going to be a huge change for the workers," said Minsun Ji, executive director of **El Centro Humanitario** para Los Trabajadores, a nonprofit day laborer center. "Working with the Police Department is going to make a difference."

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