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Unjustly fired bakery workers get last paycheck

By MeganCottrell, Thursday at 2:42 pm



This morning, former employees of Rolf's Patisserie in Lincolnwood are counting a small victory. As regular readers may recall, the company's 134 employees [were let go](#) last month with no notice. To make matters worse, their final paychecks bounced. Today, news is spreading that the company will not only make good on the workers' last paychecks, but also cover any banking fees attributed to those bounced checks as well.

"It's a small fraction of what they legally owe us," said Deyanira Alvarez, one of the former employees at Rolf's, in a press release. "It's a good start, but it's just a start."

Alvarez and the rest of the staff got the news that the factory was shutting down on Friday, Dec. 10, when owner Lloyd Culbertson showed up at the plant and asked the production manager to log him into the company website and leave the room. Just 30 minutes later, the employee checked the site and saw a three-sentence notice that the factory was shutting down for good. Last week, the workers filed a class action lawsuit against the company, alleging that Culbertson violated the federal

[Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act](#), by not giving employees 60 days advanced notice of the shutdown.

Just because workers are now getting the balance of their last checks doesn't mean the fight is over, former employees say. They will continue to push for an additional 60 days worth of pay--which they say they are owed under federal labor law.

"We're only asking for what we're owed, but look at what we have to go through," said Karen Leyva, who worked at the plant for six years. "No one should have to fight this hard just to make their boss follow the law."

Rolf's has been reportedly having a difficult financial run since late 2010, when more than 100 cases of food poisoning were linked back to the factory. Rolf's ended up recalling everything they made for the holiday season, including food from Whole Foods stores in 23 states, [according to Grub Street Chicago](#).

The workers are being supported by [ARISE Chicago](#), a workers-rights center backed by religious leaders across the city.

Will the workers prevail? Do you think workers are owed the same rights in tough economic times that they are when the economy is booming? Tell us what you think, and come back to Muckrakers for any new developments.

Photo credit: [Andy Nguyen](#)