

Calif. lawmakers focus on labor laws

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO — Big issues in the workplace — wages, overtime, time off, working conditions — are also major topics in the state Legislature. And this year, lawmakers delivered some tangible changes that will be felt in the pocketbook.

At the top of the list, of course, is an increase in the minimum wage that swept through Democrat-dominated Sacramento, despite opposition from powerful business interests. But workers didn't get all of their agenda passed into law.

"We were able to improve upon existing protections as well as support workers in a number of new ways, including increasing the minimum wage," said Steve Smith, a spokesman for the California Labor Federation. "If you look at this year, compared to over the past decade, it would be hard to argue that there's been a better year for worker legislation."

Many of the latest changes, Smith said, might seem incremental. But all are important, he explained, because "the cumulative effect is to make it harder for employers to violate the rights of workers, which is a good thing."

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