

# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS WESTERN DIVISION

JAMES W. MOCORMACK, CLERK By: DEP CLERK

VERONICA HEILESEN and AARON WILLIAMS, Each Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated

**PLAINTIFFS** 

vs.

No. 4:18-cv-753 - SWW

AMPEX BRANDS BURLESON, LLC

**DEFENDANT** 

#### ORIGINAL COMPLAINT - CLASS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

COME NOW Plaintiffs Veronica Heilesen and Aaron Williams, each individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, by and through their attorneys Chris Burks and Josh Sanford of Sanford Law Firm, PLLC, and for their Original Complaint—Class and Collective Action against Defendant Ampex Brands Burleson, LLC ("Defendant"), do hereby state and allege as follows:

#### I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS

- 1. This is a class and collective action brought by Plaintiffs Veronica Heilesen and Aaron Williams, each individually and on behalf of all hourly-paid cashiers and managers employed by Defendant at any time within a three-year period preceding the filing of this Complaint.
- 2. Plaintiffs bring this action under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. §
  201, et seq. ("FLSA") and the Arkansas Minimum Wage Act, Ark. Code Ann. § 11-4-201,
  et seq. ("AMWA"), for declaratory judgment, monetary damages, liquidated damages,
  prejudgment interest, and costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees, as a result of
  This case assigned to District Judge Wright

and to Magistrate Judge Harris

Defendant's failure to pay Plaintiffs and other hourly-paid cashiers and managers lawful

overtime compensation for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per week.

3. Upon information and belief, for at least three (3) years prior to the filing of

this Complaint, Defendant has willfully and intentionally committed violations of the

FLSA and the AMWA as described, infra.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas has

subject matter jurisdiction over this suit under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1331

because this suit raises federal questions under the FLSA.

5. This complaint also alleges AMWA violations, which arise out of the same

set of operative facts as the federal cause of action herein alleged; accordingly, this

state cause of action would be expected to be tried with the federal claim in a single

judicial proceeding. Therefore, this Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiffs'

AMWA claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).

6. The acts alleged in this Complaint had their principal effect within the

Jonesboro Division of the Eastern District of Arkansas, and venue is proper in this Court

pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391.

7. Defendant does business in this District and a substantial part of the

events alleged herein occurred in this District.

8. The witnesses to the overtime wage violations alleged in the Complaint

reside in this District.

III. THE PARTIES

9. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all the preceding paragraphs of this

Complaint as if fully set forth in this section.

10. Plaintiff Veronica Heilesen is a resident and citizen of Howard County,

Texas.

11. Plaintiff Aaron Williams is a resident and citizen of Pulaski County.

12. Within the past three (3) years, Plaintiffs were employed by Defendant at

Defendant's eateries in Little Rock.

13. At all times material herein, Plaintiffs and those similarly situated have

been entitled to the rights, protections and benefits provided under the FLSA.

14. At all times relevant herein, Plaintiffs and those similarly situated who

worked in Arkansas have been entitled to the rights, protections and benefits provided

under the AMWA.

15. Defendant is an "employer" within the meanings set forth in the FLSA and

the AMWA, and was, at all times relevant to the allegations in this Complaint, Plaintiffs'

employer, as well as the employer of the members of the class and collective.

16. Defendant is foreign, for-profit limited liability company, registered and

licensed to do business in the State of Arkansas.

17. Defendant's registered agent for service of process in Arkansas is

Corporation Service Company, 300 Spring Building, Suite 900, 300 South Spring Street,

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201.

18. During each of the three years preceding the filing of this Complaint,

Defendant employed at least two individuals who were engaged in interstate commerce

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or in the production of goods for interstate commerce, or had employees handling,

selling, or otherwise working on goods or materials that have been moved in or

produced for commerce by any person.

19. At all relevant times, Defendant continuously employed at least four (4)

employees.

20. At all relevant times, Defendant's gross volume of sales made or business

done has exceeded \$500,000.00 per year.

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

21. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as

if fully set forth in this section.

22. Defendant owns and operates several KFC and Long John Silvers

restaurants throughout Arkansas and the surrounding states.

23. Plaintiffs and other cashiers and managers were paid an hourly rate by

Defendant.

24. Plaintiffs and other cashiers and managers worked more than forty (40)

hours in most workweeks.

25. Defendant routinely scheduled Plaintiffs and other cashiers and managers

to work more than forty (40) hours in a single workweek.

26. It was Defendant's commonly applied practice to not pay Plaintiffs and

other cashiers and managers for all of the hours during which they were performing

labor for Defendant.

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27. Defendant had a practice of not paying Plaintiffs and other cashiers and

managers one and one-half (1.5) times their regular rate for all hours worked in excess

of forty (40) hours per workweek.

28. Plaintiffs and other cashiers and managers worked an average of five to

ten hours of overtime in most workweeks for Defendant for which they were not lawfully

compensated.

29. At all relevant times herein, Defendant has deprived Plaintiffs and all

others similarly situated of a proper overtime premium for all of the hours they worked in

excess of forty (40) hours in a week.

30. Defendant knew, or showed reckless disregard for whether, the way it

paid Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated violated the FLSA and the AMWA.

V. REPRESENTATIVE ACTION ALLEGATIONS

FLSA § 216(b) Collective

31. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all the preceding paragraphs of this

Complaint as if fully set forth in this section.

32. Plaintiffs bring this claim for relief for violation of the FLSA as a collective

action pursuant to Section 16(b) of the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).

33. Plaintiffs brings their FLSA claim on behalf of all other cashiers and

managers employed by Defendant at any time within the applicable statute of limitations

period, who were denied a proper overtime premium of one and one-half (1.5) times

their regular rate for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) per week and who are

entitled to payment of the following types of damages:

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A. Payment for all hours worked, including payment of a lawful overtime

premium for all hours worked for Defendant in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek;

B. Liquidated damages; and

C. Attorneys' fees and costs.

34. In conformity with the requirements of FLSA Section 16(b), Plaintiffs have

attached hereto as Exhibit "A" their written Consent to Join this lawsuit.

35. The relevant time period dates back three (3) years from the date on

which Plaintiffs' Original Complaint—Class and Collective Action was filed and

continues forward through the date of judgment pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 255(a).

36. The members of the proposed FLSA Collective are similarly situated in

that they share these traits:

A. They were paid hourly rates;

B. They recorded their time in the same manner; and

C. They were subject to Defendant's common practice not paying a lawful

overtime premium for all hours worked over forty (40) hours per work week.

37. Plaintiff is unable to state the exact number of the potential members of

the FLSA Collective but believes that the group exceeds 50 persons.

38. Defendant can readily identify the members of the Section 16(b)

Collective. The names, physical addresses, electronic mailing addresses and phone

numbers of the FLSA collective action members are available from Defendant, and a

Court-approved Notice should be provided to the FLSA collective action members via

first class mail, email and text message to their last known physical and electronic

mailing addresses and cell phone numbers as soon as possible, together with other

documents and information descriptive of Plaintiffs' FLSA claim.

B. AMWA Rule 23 Class

39. Plaintiffs bring this action on behalf of themselves and all other similarly

situated employees, former and present, who were and/or are affected by Defendant's

willful and intentional violation of the AMWA pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of

Civil Procedure.

40. Plaintiffs propose to represent the class of hourly-paid cashiers and

managers who are/were employed by Defendant within the relevant time period within

the State of Arkansas.

41. Common questions of law and fact relate to all members of the proposed

class, such as whether Defendant paid the members of the proposed class for all hours

worked, including overtime in accordance with the AMWA.

42. Common questions of law and fact predominate over any questions

affecting only the individual named Plaintiffs, and a class action is superior to other

available methods for fairly and efficiently adjudicating the claims of the members of the

proposed AMWA class.

43. The class members have no interest in individually controlling the

prosecution of separate actions because the policy of the AMWA provides a bright-line

rule for protecting all non-exempt employees. To wit: "It is declared to be the public

policy of the State of Arkansas to establish minimum wages for workers in order to

safeguard their health, efficiency, and general well-being and to protect them as well as

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their employers from the effects of serious and unfair competition resulting from wage

levels detrimental to their health, efficiency, and well-being." Ark. Code Ann. § 11-4-202.

44. Plaintiffs are unable to state the exact number of the potential members of

the AMWA class but believes that the class exceeds 50 persons. Therefore, the class is

so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.

45. At the time of the filing of this Complaint, neither Plaintiffs nor Plaintiffs'

counsel knows of any litigation already begun by any members of the proposed class

concerning the allegations in this Complaint.

46. Concentrating the litigation in this forum is highly desirable because

Defendant does business in the Eastern District of Arkansas and because Plaintiffs and

all proposed class members work or worked in Arkansas.

47. No difficulties are likely to be encountered in the management of the class.

48. The claims of Plaintiffs are typical of the claims of the proposed class in

that Plaintiffs worked as a shift leader and were paid an hourly wage for Defendant and

experienced the same violations of the AMWA that all other class members suffered.

49. Plaintiffs and their counsel will fairly and adequately protect the interests

of the class.

50. Plaintiffs' counsel is competent to litigate Rule 23 class actions and other

complex litigation matters, including wage and hour cases like this one, and to the

extent, if any, that they find that they are not, they are able and willing to associate

additional counsel.

51. Prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the class would create the risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to individual members of the class, establishing incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant.

### VI. FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF (Individual Claims for Violations of the FLSA)

- 52. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth in this section.
- 53. Plaintiffs assert this claim for damages and declaratory relief pursuant to the FLSA.
- 54. At all relevant times, Defendant has been, and continues to be, an enterprise engaged in commerce within the meaning of the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 203.
- 55. At all relevant times, Defendant was Plaintiffs' "employer" within the meaning of the FLSA, 29. U.S.C. § 203.
- 56. 29 U.S.C. § 207 requires any enterprise engaged in commerce to pay all employees one and one-half (1.5) times their regular wage for all hours worked over forty (40) hours in a week, unless an employee meets certain exemption requirements of 29 U.S.C. § 213 and all accompanying Department of Labor regulations.
- 57. Despite the entitlement of Plaintiffs to overtime payments under the FLSA, Defendant failed to pay Plaintiffs an overtime rate of one and one-half (1.5) times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked over forty (40) in each one-week period.
- 58. Defendant's failure to pay Plaintiffs overtime wages owed was willful, intentional, unreasonable, arbitrary and in bad faith.

59. By reason of the unlawful acts alleged herein, Defendant is liable to

Plaintiffs for monetary damages, liquidated damages, and costs, including reasonable

attorneys' fees, for all violations that occurred within the past three (3) years.

60. Alternatively, should the Court find that Defendant acted in good faith in

failing to pay Plaintiffs as provided by the FLSA, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of

prejudgment interest at the applicable legal rate.

VII. SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF (Collective Action Claim for Violation of FLSA)

61. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all the preceding paragraphs of this Original

Complaint as if fully set forth in this section.

62. Plaintiffs brings this collective action on behalf of all other cashiers and

managers employed by Defendant to recover monetary damages owed by Defendant to

Plaintiffs and members of the putative collective for unpaid overtime compensation for

all the hours they worked in excess of forty (40) each week.

63. Plaintiffs bring this action on behalf of themselves and all other cashiers

and managers, former and present, who were and/or are affected by Defendant's willful

and intentional violation of the FLSA.

64. 29 U.S.C. § 207 requires employers to pay employees one and one-half

(1.5) times the employee's regular rate for all hours that the employee works in excess

of forty (40) per week.

65. Like Plaintiffs, other cashiers and managers regularly worked more than

forty (40) hours in a week.

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66. Defendant failed to pay these cashiers and managers at the proper

overtime rate for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a week, despite their

entitlement thereto.

67. Because these employees are similarly situated to Plaintiffs, and are owed

overtime for the same reasons, the opt-in collective may be properly defined as:

All hourly-paid cashiers and managers within the past three (3) years.

68. Defendant's conduct and practice, as described above, has been and is

willful, intentional, unreasonable, arbitrary and in bad faith.

69. By reason of the unlawful acts alleged in this Complaint, Defendant is

liable to Plaintiffs and all those similarly situated for, and Plaintiffs and all those similarly

situated seek, unpaid overtime wages, liquidated damages, and costs, including

reasonable attorney's fees as provided by the FLSA.

70. Alternatively, should the Court find that Defendant acted in good faith in

failing to pay Plaintiffs and all those similarly situated as provided by the FLSA, Plaintiffs

and all those similarly situated are entitled to an award of prejudgment interest at the

applicable legal rate.

VIII. THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF (Individual Claims for Violations of the AMWA)

71. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as

if fully set forth in this section.

72. Plaintiffs assert this claim for damages and declaratory relief pursuant to

the AMWA.

73. At all times relevant herein, Defendant was Plaintiffs' "employer" within the

meaning of the AMWA, Ark. Code Ann. § 11-4-203(4).

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74. Arkansas Code Annotated § 11-4-211 requires employers to pay all

employees one and one-half (1.5) times regular wages for all hours worked over forty

(40) hours in a week, unless an employee meets the exemption requirements of 29

U.S.C. § 213 and accompanying Department of Labor regulations.

75. Defendant failed to pay Plaintiffs a proper overtime premium for all hours

worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a week as required under the AMWA.

76. Despite the entitlement of Plaintiffs to payment of lawful overtime

payments under the AMWA, Defendant failed to pay Plaintiffs a lawful overtime

premium.

77. Defendant's conduct and practices, as described above, was willful,

intentional, unreasonable, arbitrary and in bad faith.

78. By reason of the unlawful acts alleged herein, Defendant is liable to

Plaintiffs for, and Plaintiffs seek, monetary damages, liquidated damages, prejudgment

interest, civil penalties and costs, including reasonable attorney's fees as provided by

the AMWA.

79. Alternatively, should the Court find the Defendant acted in good faith in

failing to pay Plaintiffs as provided by the AMWA, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of

prejudgment interest at the applicable legal rate.

IX. FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF (Class Action Claim for Violation of the AMWA)

80. Plaintiffs repeat and re-allege all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as

though fully incorporated in this section.

81. Plaintiffs, each individually and on behalf of the members of the proposed

class, assert this claim for damages and declaratory relief pursuant to the AMWA.

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82. At all relevant times, Defendant has been an "employer" of Plaintiffs and

the members of the proposed class within the meaning of the AMWA, Arkansas Code

Annotated § 11-4-203(4).

83. Arkansas Code Annotated §§ 11-4-210 and 211 require employers to pay

all employees a minimum wage for all hours worked up to forty (40) in one week and to

pay one and one-half (1.5) times regular wages for all hours worked over forty (40)

hours in a week, unless an employee meets the exemption requirements of 29 U.S.C. §

213 and accompanying Department of Labor regulations.

84. Defendant classified Plaintiffs and members of the proposed class as non-

exempt from the overtime requirements of the AMWA.

85. Despite the entitlement of Plaintiffs and the members of the proposed

class to overtime payments under the AMWA, Defendant failed to pay Plaintiffs and the

members of the proposed class an overtime rate of one and one-half (1.5) times their

regular rates of pay for all hours worked over forty (40) per workweek.

86. Plaintiffs propose to represent the AMWA liability class of individuals

defined as follows:

All hourly-paid cashiers and managers in Arkansas within the past three years.

87. Defendant's conduct and practices, as described above, were willful,

intentional, unreasonable, arbitrary and in bad faith.

88. By reason of the unlawful acts alleged herein, Defendant is liable to

Plaintiffs and the proposed class for monetary damages, liquidated damages, costs,

and a reasonable attorney's fee provided by the AMWA for all violations which occurred

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within the three (3) years prior to the filing of this Complaint, plus periods of equitable

tolling.

89. Alternatively, should the Court find that Defendant acted in good faith in

failing to pay Plaintiffs and members of the proposed class as provided by the AMWA,

Plaintiffs and members of the proposed class are entitled to an award of prejudgment

interest at the applicable legal rate.

X. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, premises considered, Plaintiffs Veronica Heilesen and Aaron

Williams, each individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, respectfully pray

that Defendant be summoned to appear and to answer herein and for the following

relief:

A. That Defendant be required to account to Plaintiffs, the collective and

class members, and the Court for all of the hours worked by Plaintiffs and the collective

and class members and all monies paid to them;

B. A declaratory judgment that Defendant's practices alleged herein violate

the FLSA and attendant regulations at 29 C.F.R. § 516 et seq.;

C. A declaratory judgment that Defendant's practices alleged herein violate

the AMWA and the related regulations;

D. Certification of, and proper notice to, together with an opportunity to

participate in the litigation, all qualifying current and former employees;

E. Judgment for damages for all unpaid overtime compensation under the

FLSA and attendant regulations at 29 C.F.R. §516 et seq.;

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F. Judgment for damages for all unpaid overtime compensation under the

AMWA and the related regulations;

G. Judgment for liquidated damages pursuant to the FLSA and attendant

regulations at 29 C.F.R. §516 et seq., in an amount equal to all unpaid overtime

compensation owed to Plaintiffs and members of the collective and class members

during the applicable statutory period;

H. Judgment for liquidated damages pursuant to the AMWA and the relating

regulations;

I. An order directing Defendant to pay Plaintiffs and members of the

collective and class pre-judgment interest, reasonable attorney's fees and all costs

connected with this action; and

J. Such other and further relief as this Court may deem necessary, just and

proper.

Respectfully submitted,

VERONICA HEILESEN and AARON WILLIAMS, Each Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated, PLAINTIFFS

SANFORD LAW FIRM, PLLC One Financial Center 650 South Shackleford, Suite 411 Little Rock, Arkansas 72211 Telephone: (501) 221-0088

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Josh Sanford

Ark. Bar No. 2001037 josh@sanfordlawfirm.com

#### IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS WESTERN DIVISION

VERONICA HEILESEN and AARON WILLIAMS, Each Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated

**PLAINTIFFS** 

VS.

No. 4:18-cv-\_\_\_\_

#### AMPEX BRANDS BURLESON, LLC

**DEFENDANT** 

#### **CONSENT TO JOIN COLLECTIVE ACTION**

I have been employed as an hourly paid cashier or manager for Defendant Ampex Brands Burleson, LLC, during some of the three years prior to the signing of this document. I understand this lawsuit is being brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act for unpaid wages and other relief. I consent to becoming a party-plaintiff in this lawsuit, to be represented by Sanford Law Firm, PLLC, and to be bound by any settlement of this action or adjudication by the Court.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

AARON WILLIAMS

Date: October 11, 2018

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VERONICA HEILESEN and AARON WILLIAMS, Each Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated

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I have been employed as an hourly paid cashier or manager for Defendant Ampex Brands Burleson, LLC, during some of the three years prior to the signing of this document. I understand this lawsuit is being brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act for unpaid wages and other relief. I consent to becoming a party-plaintiff in this lawsuit, to be represented by Sanford Law Firm, PLLC, and to be bound by any settlement of this action or adjudication by the Court.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

VERONICA HEILESEN

Date: October 11, 2018

The JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

CIVIL COVER SHEET 4: 18 - cv - 753 - SWW

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil deplets there.

purpose of initiating the civil do	ocket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCT	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO	RM.)						
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS						
VERONICA HEILESEN and AARON WILLIAMS, Individually and Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated				AMPEX BRANDS BURLSON, LLC						
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Howard				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant						
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)  NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.						
										(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number) Josh Sanford, SANFORD LAW FIRM, PLLC, One Financial Cente 650 South Shackleford, Suite 411, Little Rock, Arkansas 72211 501-221-0088; josh@sanfordlawfirm.com
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)				TIZENSHIP OF PI (For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPA	L PARTIES	Place an "X" in ( and One Box fo			
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	ite Court	Appellate Court			r District	Litigation Transfer	-	Litigation Direct F	on -	
			re filing (	Do not cite jurisdictional stat	tutes unless di	iversity):				
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	ON Brief description of ca Unpaid Overtime	iuse:								
VII. REQUESTED IN		IS A CLASS ACTIO	N D	EMAND \$		HECK YES only	if demanded in	compla	int:	
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2					URY DEMAND:	_	<b>X</b> No		
VIII. RELATED CAS	E(S)									
IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKI	ET NUMBER				
DATE		SIGNATURE OF AT	TORNEY	OF RECORD						
10/11/2018	$M \cup M$									
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY										
RECEIPT # A	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUD	GE			

## **ClassAction.org**

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Arkansas KFC, Long John Silvers Employees Sue Over Allegedly Unpaid Overtime Wages</u>