



## NEWS FROM **Teamsters Local 251**

121 Brightridge Ave.  
East Providence, R.I. 02914  
Phone: (401) 434-0454  
Fax: (401) 431-1893

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**Contact:  
David Robbins, (401) 434-0454**

### **OWNER OF PROVIDENCE JOURNAL ATTEMPTS TO AVOID OVERTIME PAY LAWS**

#### ***Teamsters Local 251 Opposes Gatehouse Media's Efforts to Shirk Responsibility to Its Workers***

(PROVIDENCE, R.I.) – Gatehouse Media, the corporate owner of the Providence Journal, has asked the state of Rhode Island for an exemption on Sunday and holiday overtime requirements.

Gatehouse recently filed the request with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. The company had flaunted state wage laws for four years, and the filing is another egregious attempt to milk more money from its workers. Teamsters Local 251 adamantly opposes this request.

Teamsters Local 251 has been in negotiations with Gatehouse Media for a successor collective bargaining agreement since September 2018. The company has yet to agree to any wage increases for the job classifications represented by the union; these include mailers, inserters and machine maintenance employees who work at the company's Kinsley Street plant in Providence.

During the course of negotiations, Teamsters Local 251 learned that Gatehouse was in violation of Rhode Island wage and hour laws on overtime pay for work on Sundays and Rhode Island legal holidays. The union demanded that Gatehouse immediately correct the violation and make the workers whole. Initially the company claimed it had an exemption from the overtime requirement, and they were not obligated to pay the lost overtime wages.

The Teamsters pressed the company for a copy of the alleged exemption. In the face of the union pressure, the company relented and paid out almost \$200,000 in back pay to current and former employees. These payments were retroactive three years from the date the union demanded the back pay award. The company refuses

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to pay such lost wages back to September 2014 when Gatehouse took over the Providence Journal. According to Gatehouse Media management: *“The law only requires us to pay these lost wages retroactive to three years from the date of any wage complaint.”*

### **Gatehouse’s Continued Assault on Middle Class Jobs**

Prior to Gatehouse’s acquisition of The Providence Journal, most bargaining unit employees had full-time jobs with benefits. Since 2014, Gatehouse has continued to undermine quality, middle class jobs and replaced them with a part-time workforce. No vacant full-time jobs have been filled since Gatehouse took over. The bargaining unit consists of about 125 employees; a large majority is part-time, and Gatehouse has refused to agree to post vacant full-time jobs for bidding so that part-time employees can move into a full-time job with benefits.

Additionally, there is a high turnover rate among the part-timers. A majority of these employees are recent immigrants, and English is not their first language. In the face of the high turnover rate and Gatehouse’s exploitative practices, the Teamsters have initiated an ongoing internal organizing drive at the plant, to build rank and file power on the shop floor. The union has translated the collective bargaining agreement and all union notices into both Spanish and Arabic.

Among the bargaining demands Teamsters Local 251 has on the table is full back pay for the wage theft pocketed by the employer. Gatehouse Media has made it clear at the table that the company is profitable and it is not claiming inability to meet the workers’ economic demands for across the board wage increases and improved benefits for part-timers.