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Suit over skimmed tips at Philly restaurant ends in \$40,000 settlement



Workers from a Philadelphia sushi restaurant sued the establishment for illegally withholding 3 percent to 30 percent of their credit card tips. The three employees who filed the lawsuit, Diana Allinger, Claire Trindle, and Jeff Spencer, gather at their lawyers' office, Galfand Berger LLC. (Nathaniel Hamilton/for Newsworks)

Five former employees of a Center City restaurant are walking away with a hefty settlement.

They hope the deal will send a strong signal to the owners of other eateries that it's illegal to skim their employees' tips.

The five workers are happy with a \$40,000 settlement from their former employer, whom they allege withheld tip money from them over several years.

Claire Trindle says fighting her old bosses wasn't easy, even if the restaurant ownership was wrong.

"It was very scary in the beginning because it was scary to stand up and realize that we were confronting an authority figure, and it sort of helped because we worked together," Trindle said.

The group is not publicizing the restaurant's name because its owner cooperated and agreed to the settlement. *(UPDATE: This morning, WHYY reported that the restaurant is Fat Salmon, at 719 Walnut St. The restaurant's management did not respond to requests for a response.)*

It's accused of illegally withholding between 3 and 30 percent of employee tips and, in some cases, using the money to pay the restaurant's credit card transaction fees.

"We feel it certainly sends a message that illegal wage practices are pursuable," said Henry Yampolsky, part of the legal team for the former workers. "In this case, the restaurant came to the negotiating table and we were able to reach a very very good accord, which we believe was very very fair to our clients."

Since the case ended in a settlement and was not adjudicated, it does not create a legal precedent.

In 2011, Philadelphia enacted a law prohibiting restaurants from deducting credit card transaction fees from employee tips.