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## JANUARY 21 - 25, 2009 LA CONVENTION CENTER

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## Securing Safe Wages

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published: September 03, 1998

Let's hope the adage "You get what you pay for" doesn't apply at LAX, because when it comes to security, workers don't get paid much - \$5.75 an hour to be exact. If that seems like chump change, considering that these are the guys who eyeball the baggage as it moves through the security X-ray machines to ensure an Uzi isn't tucked away in a bowling bag, you aren't alone in your concern. Recently the Living Wage Coalition, the nonprofit that brought you the 1997 living-wage ordinance, launched a campaign to get security workers at LAX a pay hike. Citing the low pay as a big problem that results in a rapid turnover among employees, as high as 50 percent a year according to the airlines' estimates, the coalition is hoping the City Council will agree to a raise for future contracts. Last Thursday, the City Council's Personnel Committee recommended to the council an amendment to retool language in the city's existing living-wage ordinance, making it clear that it applies to airport subcontractors. Under the ordinance, businesses that receive city funds are required to pay employees at least \$7.39 an hour with benefits, \$8.64 without.

The proposed raise comes amid growing concern over two recent security breaches that shut down Terminal 1 at LAX this month. The first came after a real gun made its way past security. Ten days later the terminal was again closed down, this time after a gun-shaped lighter also cleared baggage inspectors.

Employees of Huntleigh USA Corp., which handles security and other services at Terminal 1, say that in both instances the screeners on duty spotted suspicious shapes in hand-carried bags, but were required to call a supervisor with the authority to alert airport police. The delay allowed the carriers of the suspicious baggage to walk away. Procedures have since been revamped to eliminate delays.

And while LAX, like other airports across the country, is tightening security measures in the wake of recent U.S. military strikes, travelers here will have to wait until at least next month for the City Council to vote on amendments to the living-wage ordinance.

In the meantime, LAX patrons can simply relax with the knowledge that a brand-new baggage inspector, probably exhausted from moonlighting, with fewer hours of training than the person who cuts your hair, has determined that there is no dangerous hardware onboard your flight.



No improvements are foreseen, however, on the skimpy allotments of legroom, oxygen and peanuts.

-Bobbi Murray

## **The Pros of Conning?**

In its quest to out-hip Details, P.O.V. and possibly even Esquire, ICON magazine seems to have forgotten one detail: paying its contributors, this according to freelancers who say the rag has left them feeling, well, conned.

OffBeat has learned that the hyperslick, New York-based publication, which claims a 150,000 circulation, is well in arrears (about 120 days in some cases) to some of its writers and photographers. Contributors say their phone calls to the editorial and accounting offices are no longer taken.

"It seems all the L.A. contributors have got fucked," says Clive McLean, a veteran Hollywood photographer who shot a feature on the Reverend Al Sharpton for ICON in March/April. McLean says it was one of the few jobs in his career that ended up costing him money. "They owe me \$4,000 for that photo shoot. They've told me a few times, 'Oh yeah, you're definitely getting it next month. You're first on the list!' Evidently, they've told everybody that."

Of particular insult to McLean was that ICON publisher David Getson tagged along for the shoot. "He was telling me the whole time what a big fan of my work he was and he'd admired me for years," McLean recalls. "Then he stiffes me."

Bruce David, an L.A.-based writer and the former editor of the now-defunct Rage, reports a similar dam in the cash flow. The magazine stiffed him for \$1,000 for a profile he penned on futurist Max Moore back in April, and David says ICON editor Robin Dolch no longer takes his phone calls.

"They are a bunch of crooks," says David, brandishing the contract he signed with the magazine, which promises payment within 30 days of publication. "Look, they continue to assign stories for future issues when they know they haven't paid contributors for past issues. It's a scam."

OffBeat spoke with Dolch, who in a rambling phone interview apologized to contributors who haven't been paid. At the same time, however, she insisted the magazine was making enough money to move into new and bigger Manhattan digs.

"Things are looking good for us," she said. "Those writers who hate us, they should and they can. But in the long run, there won't be a problem."

When asked how ICON could afford a new office but couldn't pay its contributors, Dolch referred the call to Getson.

ICON's publisher seemed irritated when OffBeat posed the question during a telephone interview. "It's absurd to say we're in trouble!" Getson said. "We're growing. You're dealing with a story that

doesn't exist."

But when asked when contributors might see some green, Getson cut the interview short. "I don't know. I don't have the books in front of me. It's impossible to say."

-Mark Cromer