

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

United States Courts
Southern District of Texas
FILED

JUL 30 2009

Clerk of Court

-----X
JOEL BRANTLEY, individually and
on behalf of all other persons similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

**COMPLAINT AND
JURY DEMAND**

INSPECTORATE AMERICA CORPORATION,
a Foreign Corporation,

Defendant.

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NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Plaintiff alleges on behalf of himself and other similarly situated current and former employees of the Defendant and who elect to opt into this action pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA"), 29 U.S.C. §§ 216(b), that they are: (i) entitled to unpaid wages from Defendant for worked performed which they received no compensation at all as well as for overtime work for which they did not receive proper overtime premium pay, as required by law, (ii) entitled to liquidated damages pursuant to the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. §§201 *et seq*; and (iii) declaratory relief pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §2201.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1337, 1343. In addition, the Court has jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims under the FLSA pursuant to 29 U.S.C § 216(b).

3. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391.

5. This Court is empowered to issue a declaratory judgment pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

THE PARTIES

6. Plaintiff, JOEL BRANTLEY was, at all relevant times, an adult individual, residing in Harris County, Texas.

7. Upon information and belief, Defendant INSPECTORATE AMERICA CORPORATION is a Delaware corporation, with a principal place of business at 3000 N Main St # 1B, Baytown, Texas, 77521.

COLLECTIVE ACTION ALLEGATIONS

8. Pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §207, Plaintiff seeks to prosecute his FLSA claims as a collective action on behalf of all persons who are or were formerly employed by Defendant in the United States at any time since May 7, 2009, to the entry of judgment in this case (the “Collective Action Period”), who were oil, gas and chemical Inspectors and employees within the meaning of the FLSA and who were not paid for hours that they worked and received no compensation as well as for overtime compensation at rates no less than one-half times the regular pay rate for all hours worked in excess of forty per workweek (the “Collective Actions Members”).

9. This collective action class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable. Although the precise number of such persons is unknown, and the facts on which the calculation of that number is presently within the sole control of the Defendant, upon information and belief, there are approximately 1,000 members of the Class during the Collective Action Period, most of whom would not be likely to file individual suits because they lack adequate financial resources, access to attorneys or knowledge of their claims.

10. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Collective Action Members and has retained counsel that is experienced and competent in the fields of employment law and class action litigation. Plaintiff has no interest that is contrary to or in conflict with those members of this collective action.

11. A collective action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy, since joinder of all members is impracticable. Furthermore, inasmuch as the damages suffered by individual Collective Action Members may be relatively small, the expense and burden of individual litigation makes it virtually impossible for the members of the collective action to individually seek redress for the wrongs done to them. There will not difficulty in the management of this action as a collective action.

12. Questions of law and fact common to the members of the collective action predominate over questions that may affect only individual members because Defendant have acted on grounds generally applicable to all members. Among the common questions of law and fact common to Plaintiff and other Collective Action Members are:

- a. whether the Defendant employed the Collective Action Members within the meaning of the FLSA;
- b. whether the Defendant failed to keep true and accurate time records for all hours worked by Plaintiff and Collective Action Members;
- c. whether Defendant failed to post or keep posted a notice explaining the minimum wages and overtime pay rights provided by the FLSA in any area where Plaintiffs are employed;

- d. whether Defendant failed to pay the Collective Action Members appropriate overtime compensation for hours worked in excess of forty hours per workweek, due to its flawed policy of paying “Chinese Overtime” in violation of the FLSA and the regulations promulgated thereunder;
- e. whether Defendant’s violations of the FLSA are willful as that term used within the context of the FLSA;
- f. whether Defendant is liable for all damages claimed hereunder, including but not limited to compensatory, punitive and statutory damages, interest, costs and disbursements and attorneys’ fees;
- g. whether Defendant should be enjoined from such violations of the FLSA in the future; and
- h. whether Plaintiff and Collective Action Members are entitled to declaratory relief.

13. Plaintiff knows of no difficulty that will be encountered in the management of this litigation that would preclude its maintenance as a collective action.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

14. At all relevant times, Defendant provided, among other things, laboratory testing, laboratory outsourcing, cargo inspection, and certification services for clients on a global basis.

15. Starting in or about March 6, 2006, until the present, Plaintiff was employed as an-Oil, Gas and Chemical Inspector (“OGC Inspector”) by the Defendant.

16. In this capacity, Plaintiff was employed at Defendant's Baytown, Texas facility, and he performed work in Texas for Defendant.

17. Plaintiff's work was performed in the normal course of the Defendant's business and was integrated into the business of the Defendant.

18. The work performed by Plaintiff required little skill and no capital investment. His duties did not include managerial responsibilities or the exercise of independent discretion or judgment.

19. Plaintiff often worked in excess of 40 hours a week, yet the Defendant willfully failed to pay Plaintiff overtime compensation of one and one-half times his regular hourly rate, in violation of the FLSA.

20. Plaintiff was employed by the Defendant from in or about March 2006 until June 2009. Throughout that time and, upon information and belief, both before that time (throughout the Class Period) and continuing until today, the Defendant has likewise employed other individuals, like the Plaintiff (the Collective Action Members/the Class) in OGC Inspector positions that required little skill and no capital investment and their duties and responsibilities did not include any managerial responsibilities or the exercise of independent discretion and judgment. Such similarly situated OGC Inspectors do not have the authority to hire or fire other employees, and they are not responsible for making hiring and firing recommendations.

21. Such individuals have worked in excess of 40 hours a week, yet the Defendant has likewise willfully failed to pay them overtime compensation of one and one-half times their regular hourly rate, in violation of the FLSA. As stated, the exact number of such

individuals is presently unknown, but within the sole knowledge of the Defendant and can be ascertained through appropriate discovery.

22. Throughout all relevant time periods, upon information and belief, and during the course of Plaintiff's own employment, while Defendant employed Plaintiff and the Collective Action Members/the Class, the Defendant failed to maintain accurate and sufficient time records and failed to post or keep posted a notice explaining the minimum wage and overtime pay rights provided by the FLSA.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF:
FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

23. Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and all Collective Action Members, realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 22 as if they were set forth herein.

24. At all relevant times, Defendant has been and continue to be, employers engaged in interstate commerce and/or the production of goods for commerce, within the meaning of the FLSA, 29 U.S.C §§ 206(a) and 207(a).

25. At all relevant times, Defendant employed, and/or continues to employ, Plaintiff and each of the Collective Action Members within the meaning of the FLSA.

26. Upon information and belief, at all relevant times, Defendant has had gross revenues in excess of \$500,000.

27. Plaintiff consents in writing to be a party to this action, pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §216(b). Plaintiff's written consent is attached hereto as **EXHIBIT A** and incorporated by reference.

28. At all relevant times, the Defendant had a policy and practice of refusing to pay proper overtime compensation to its employees for their hours worked in excess of forty hours per week.

29. As a result of the Defendant's willful failure to compensate its employees, including Plaintiff and the Collective Action members, for overtime at a rate not less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay for work performed in excess of forty hours in a workweek, the Defendant has violated and, continues to violate, the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. §§201 *et seq.*, including 29 U.S.C. §§207(a)(1) and 215(a).

30. As a result of the Defendant's failure to record, report, credit and/or compensate its employees, including Plaintiff and the Collective Action members, the Defendant has failed to make, keep and preserve records with respect to each of its employees sufficient to determine the wages, hours and other conditions and practices of employment in violation of the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201, *et seq.*, including 29 U.S.C. §§ 211(c) and 215(a).

31. The foregoing conduct, as alleged, constitutes a willful violation of the FLSA within the meaning 29 U.S.C § 255(a).

32. Due to the Defendant's FLSA violations, Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and the Collective Action members, is entitled to recover from the Defendant, their unpaid wages, overtime compensation, an additional amount equal as liquidated damages, additional liquidated damages for unreasonably delayed payment of wages, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs and disbursements of this action, pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, Plaintiff on behalf of himself and all other similarly situated Collective Action Members, respectfully requests that this Court grant the following relief:

- a. Designation of this action as a collective action on behalf of the Collective Action Members and prompt issuance of notice pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) to all

similarly situated members of an FLSA Opt-In Class, appraising them of the pendency of this action, permitting them to assert timely FLSA claims in this action by filing individual Consents to Sue pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §216(b) and appointing Plaintiff and his counsel to represent the Collective Action members;

- b. A declaratory judgment that the practices complained of herein are unlawful under the FLSA;
- c. An injunction against the Defendant and its officers, agents, successors, employees, representatives and any and all persons in concert with it, as provided by law, from engaging in each of the unlawful practices, policies and patterns set forth herein;
- d. An award of unpaid wages and overtime compensation due under the FLSA;
- e. An award of liquidated and/or punitive damages as a result of the Defendant's willful failure to pay wages and overtime compensation pursuant to 29 U.S.C § 216;
- g. An award of prejudgment and post judgment interest;
- h. An award of costs and expenses of this action together with reasonable attorneys' and expert fees; and
- i. Such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Pursuant to Rule 38(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all questions of fact raised by the complaint.

Dated: July 14, 2009



Bernard R. Mazaheri, Esq.
TX Bar Number 24066628
Andrew Frisch*
Morgan & Morgan, P.A.
20 N Orange Ave Fl 16
Orlando, Florida 32801
Telephone: (407) 420-1414
Facsimile: (404) 965-8812
BMazaheri@forthepeople.com

Jeffrey M. Gottlieb, Esq.[†]
Gottlieb & Associates
Attorneys at Law
150 East 18th Street
Suite PHR
New York, New York 10003
Tel: (212)228-9795
Fax: (212)982-6284
NYJG@aol.com

Trial Counsel for Plaintiff

* Andrew Frisch's admission to the Southern District of Texas is currently pending.

[†] Jeffrey Gottlieb will be filing a Motion to Appear Pro Hac Vice in the instant case.

CIVIL COVER SHEET

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 docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

JOEL BRANTLEY, individually and on behalf of all other persons similarly situated

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff _____
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)
*Morgan + Morgan, P.A. 20 North Orange Ave., 11th Floor
Orlando, FL 32801
407-420-1414*

DEFENDANTS

*INSPECTORATE AMERICA CORPORATION,
a Foreign Corporation*

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant _____
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
- 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
- 2 U.S. Government Defendant
- 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | PTF | DEF | | PTF | DEF |
| Citizen of This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Citizen of Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Foreign Nation | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans) <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane <input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice <input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 610 Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> 620 Other Food & Drug <input type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="checkbox"/> 630 Liquor Laws <input type="checkbox"/> 640 R.R. & Truck <input type="checkbox"/> 650 Airline Regs. <input type="checkbox"/> 660 Occupational Safety/Health <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent <input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY <input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) <input type="checkbox"/> 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	<input type="checkbox"/> 400 State Reapportionment <input type="checkbox"/> 410 Antitrust <input type="checkbox"/> 430 Banks and Banking <input type="checkbox"/> 450 Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> 460 Deportation <input type="checkbox"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations <input type="checkbox"/> 480 Consumer Credit <input type="checkbox"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV <input type="checkbox"/> 810 Selective Service <input type="checkbox"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410 <input type="checkbox"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions <input type="checkbox"/> 891 Agricultural Acts <input type="checkbox"/> 892 Economic Stabilization Act <input type="checkbox"/> 893 Environmental Matters <input type="checkbox"/> 894 Energy Allocation Act <input type="checkbox"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act <input type="checkbox"/> 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice <input type="checkbox"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
REAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	CIVIL RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting <input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/Accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> 444 Welfare <input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights	PRISONER PETITIONS <input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence Habeas Corpus: <input type="checkbox"/> 530 General <input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition	LABOR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations <input type="checkbox"/> 730 Labor/Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act <input type="checkbox"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="checkbox"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation <input type="checkbox"/> 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act IMMIGRATION <input type="checkbox"/> 462 Naturalization Application <input type="checkbox"/> 463 Habeas Corpus - Alien Detainee <input type="checkbox"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions		

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding
- 2 Removed from State Court
- 3 Remanded from Appellate Court
- 4 Reinstated or Reopened
- 5 Transferred from another district (specify)
- 6 Multidistrict Litigation
- 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):

29 U.S.C. § 216(b)

Brief description of cause:

ACTION FOR UNPAID OVERTIME WAGES

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

- CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23
- DEMAND \$ *UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME*
- CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions): JUDGE _____ DOCKET NUMBER _____

DATE *7/14/09* SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD *[Signature]*

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # _____ AMOUNT _____ APPLYING IFP _____ JUDGE _____ MAG. JUDGE _____