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Starbucks Workers Tips Suit Scores \$14 Million Win Against Coffee Giant

The Huffington Post | By Caroline Fairchild Posted: 11/13/2012 12:05 pm EST Updated: 11/13/2012 4:22 pm EST



Starbucks workers in Massachusetts just got the tip of a lifetime.

Late last week, a federal appeals court in Boston awarded a group of baristas at the Seattle-based coffee chain \$14 million, the Boston Globe reports.

The court ruled that the coffee giant violated state laws that prohibit supervisors from getting a cut of pooled tips.

Starbucks lost its argument that shift supervisors should be classified as wait staff and partake in shared tips because they have no actual “managerial responsibility,” Justice News Flash reports.

The ruling will impact around 11,000 baristas who worked at Starbucks between 2005 to 2011 and damages may rise to \$18 million with interest, Shannon Liss-Riordan, a lawyer representing the baristas, told the Globe.

“Just because they’re Starbucks, they can’t ignore the law that protects Massachusetts workers,” said Liss-Riordan.

In a statement issued after the ruling Starbucks said it would respect the court's decision. "Since we just received the ruling, we are still evaluating the best way to change our tipping policy in Massachusetts to ensure compliance with state law while continuing to fairly reward our hard-working partners," according to the statement shared with The Huffington Post.

This isn't the first time that Starbucks has gotten into hot water over its tip sharing policy. In 2009, the company was charged with sharing tips in a manner that violated California labor law. However, an appeals court agreed that in California, shift supervisors may share in tip pools reversing a lower-court ruling.

Tip pooling law has confused other coffee giants as well. In 2010, a Dunkin' Donuts employee filed a lawsuit against managers for sharing tips in stores across Massachusetts. The country is currently going through a period of “tip creep,” accord to Zagat. While in 2000 the average restaurant tip was 18 percent, in 2011 the number landed at 19.2 percent. Also, tip jars are now more common in places like coffee shops and pizza parlors than they were previously, writes U.S. News & World Reports.

Tip sharing lawsuits aside, Starbucks is also combating several lawsuits from customers. In February, a Michigan woman filed a \$5 million lawsuit because Starbucks coffee pods are no longer available for her coffee brewing system. The same month, a California man filed a lawsuit against the coffee giant alleging that he was discriminated against as a job applicant for having one arm. More recently, a woman in Washington sued Starbucks claiming that a loose lid on her tea led to second-degree burns.

As of September, there were 12,937 Starbucks stores in the United States. That's less than the number of McDonald's in the country, however this map shows that you can't get any further than 170 miles away from a Starbucks when in the U.S.