

# Former tax preparers sue H&R Block

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Two Columbia residents are suing H&R Block Inc., claiming the company's practice of requiring its tax preparers to complete 24 hours of unpaid training between tax seasons is a violation of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Barbara Petroski and Cathy Camden filed the suit yesterday in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri. They are seeking unpaid wages for the training as well as liquidated damages, pre-judgment and post-judgment interest, attorneys' fees and litigation costs, according to a news release from one of their attorneys.

The suit says Kansas City-based H&R Block requires its tax professionals to complete 24 hours of unpaid, mandatory training after each tax season to be eligible to prepare tax returns for the company the next tax season. It claims the company's refusal to pay tax preparers for the training is a violation of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

The suit was filed as a collective action, meaning other H&R Block tax professionals might be eligible to join the lawsuit. "Unpaid wages can be sought for the past two- or three-year period from the date the employee joins the case," according to the release from Stueve Siegel Hanson LLP.

George Hanson and Todd McGuire of **Stueve Siegel Hanson** and Bradford Lear and Todd Werts of Lear Werts LLP are representing Petroski and Camden.