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Two tax professionals sue H&R Block, alleging labor standards violations

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Two tax professionals from Columbia, Mo., are suing **H&R Block Inc.**, alleging violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Barbara Petroski and Cathy Camden claim that Kansas City-based H&R Block (NYSE: HRB) enacted a companywide policy requiring its tax professionals to complete 24 hours of unpaid, mandatory training at the end of the tax season to be eligible to prepare tax returns for H&R Block clients during the next tax season.

The lawsuit was filed Monday as a nationwide collective action, which means other H&R Block tax professionals may be eligible to join the lawsuit and seek unpaid wages from the past two or three years, along with damages and attorney fees.

"It is time for H&R Block to step up and recognize the reality of a continuing employment relationship with (its) tax professionals, and to fulfill its legal obligation to pay these employees at least minimum wage for time spent in company-mandated training," George Hanson, the lead attorney in the case, said in a release. Hanson is a lawyer with Kansas City-based **Stueve Siegel Hanson LLP**.

"It appears that H&R Block is playing fast and loose with the concept of an employment relationship and considers these tax professionals employees only when it suits the company's interests, but not when it comes to paying them for the required 24 hours of training between tax seasons," he said. "H&R Block can't have it both ways."

H&R Block could not immediately be reached for comment.