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GRIST**FEDERAL WAGE LAW APPLIES TO OFFSHORE RIG WORKERS, US SUPREME COURT SAYS**

By Mercer's *Stephanie Rosseau and Fiona Webster*
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Federal minimum wage law, rather than a more generous state wage-hour law, applies to employees working on drilling platforms off the California coast, a unanimous US Supreme Court has [ruled](#).

BACKGROUND

State laws govern waters close to the shore, but under the [Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act \(OCSLA\)](#) of 1953, federal law generally applies to distances farther out. State laws can govern beyond the shore but only if they are “applicable and not inconsistent” with federal law.

COURT'S RULING

The dispute arose when an offshore oil rig worker filed a class-action lawsuit claiming his employer was violating state law by failing to pay him for hours he wasn't working but had to remain on the drilling platform. California wage-hour law requires employers to compensate workers for time spent on standby.

But the court found that the federal [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#), which mandates payment only for hours actually worked, applied instead. “[O]ur consistent understanding of the OCSLA remains: All law on the OCS is federal, and state law serves a supporting role, to be adopted only where there is a gap in federal law’s coverage,” the court said. Since the FLSA directly addressed this wage-hour issue, the “state law is not adopted as surrogate federal law on the OCS.”

RELATED RESOURCES

- [Court's Decision](#) (US Supreme Court, 10 Jun 2019)
- [Information on OCSLA](#) (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management)
- [Information on FLSA](#) (US Department of Labor)

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