

Chicago Servers, Bartenders Swindled Out of More Than \$30M in Tips by Restaurant Group: Lawsuit

The Four Corners group, at the center of the lawsuit, said the claims are "without merit"

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Employees of more than a dozen area restaurants say they want what's due to them as they sue over the way they were given their tips. NBC 5's Lexi Sutter has the story.

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The Four Corners group is well-known for owning some of Chicago's most popular spots — and now as the target in a multimillion-dollar class-action lawsuit.

Attorney Tom Zimmerman is representing several employees of the 17 Four Corners bars and restaurants named in the suit. They say they've been scammed out of their earnings.

“We estimate there is more than \$30 million dollars in unpaid tips that are owed to the bartenders and waitresses,” Zimmerman said.

One complainant says he has records showing he was not paid approximately \$400 in tips for each two-week pay period and over the seven-year period he worked there, adding up to \$72,000 in unpaid tips just for him.

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Though unpaid tips are the sticking point for service staff — the documents also allege Four Corners is violating minimum wage laws and IRS tax code, as well as committing fraud, corruption and conspiracy.

NBC 5 took the complaints to the West Loop address listed for Four Corners, but the person inside denied that the business operated there.

In a statement, Four Corners said the truth will come to light.

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“Four Corners has been in business for over 17 years and we pride ourselves on not only the way we treat our customers, but also how we treat our employees,” the statement reads. “We are confident that when the relevant facts come to light, it will be established that these claims are without merit and based on a misunderstanding. We look forward to proving that.”

Zimmerman believes as many as 800 current and former employees are owed money. But it wasn't until one bartender cross-referenced his records and did the math that they realized it.

"The servers are subject to the computer system and we will be able through the course of this lawsuit to obtain all computer records from these restaurants in order to calculate the full amount," Zimmerman said.

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Zimmerman said he will be in the courtroom soon to get an order that will allow him to contact all employees across the 17 spots.

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