
29 C.F.R. § 784.21

Guiding principles for applying coverage and exemption provisions.

It is clear that Congress intended the Fair Labor Standards Act to be broad in its scope. “Breadth of coverage is vital to its mission” (*Powell v. U.S. Cartridge Co.*, 339 U.S. 497). An employer who claims an exemption under the Act has the burden of showing that it applies (*Walling v. General Industries Co.*, 330 U.S. 545; *Mitchell v. Kentucky Finance Co.*, 359 U.S. 290; *Tobin v. Blue Channel Corp.*, 198 F. 2d 245, approved in *Mitchell v. Myrtle Grove Packing Co.*, 350 U.S. 891; *Fleming v. Hawkeye Pearl Button Co.*, 113 F. 2d 52). Conditions specified in the language of the Act are “explicit prerequisites to exemption” (*Arnold v. Kanowsky*, 361 U.S. 388). In their application, the purpose of the exemption as shown in its legislative history as well as its language should be given effect. However, “the details with which the exemptions in this Act have been made preclude their enlargement by implication” and “no matter how broad the exemption, it is meant to apply only to” the specified activities (*Addison v. Holly Hill*, 322 U.S. 607; *Maneja v. Waiialua*, 349 U.S. 254). Exemptions provided in the Act “are to be narrowly construed against the employer seeking to assert them” and their application limited to those who come “plainly and unmistakably within their terms and spirit.” This construction of the exemptions is necessary to carry out the broad objectives for which the Act was passed (*Phillips v. Walling*, 324 U.S. 490; *Mitchell v. Kentucky Finance Co.*, supra; *Arnold v. Kanowsky*, supra; *Calaf v. Gonzales*, 127 F. 2d 934; *Bowie v. Gonzales*, 117 F. 2d 11; *Mitchell v. Stinson*, 217 F. 2d 210; *Fleming v. Hawkeye Pearl Button Co.*, 113 F. 2d 52).

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