

Tipped Minimum Wage Increase in New York a Major Victory for Workers

Tsedeye Gebreselassie, Senior Staff Attorney with the National Employment Law Project, released the below statement:

"Today, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that New York will raise the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers to \$7.50 an hour at the end of the year, up from the current \$5 an hour. In New York City, the tipped wage could rise to \$8.50 an hour if lawmakers raise the city's minimum wage.

"Governor Cuomo's announcement is the result of a nearly year-long organizing campaign by workers and their advocates, which began after the legislature raised the state's regular minimum wage to \$9 by the end of 2015 but punted on raising the tipped sub-minimum wage, instead leaving it to a governor-appointed Wage Board to issue recommendations.

"This is a major victory for workers and their advocates and marks one of the first times that the tipped minimum wage has been raised on its own. The move will boost wages for the state's 229,000 restaurant servers, hospitality workers, and other tipped workers. Most tipped workers ([70 percent](#)) are women, and in New York, their poverty rate is more than double that of the overall workforce.

"The National Employment Law Project commends Governor Cuomo and New York for this significant step forward. This increase is long overdue and will dramatically improve the lives of tipped workers. And by boosting New York's tipped wage to 83 percent of the full minimum wage, it will make New York the first state in decades to make significant progress toward eliminating the outmoded and unfair sub-minimum wage for tipped workers, as eight other states did years ago. We also urge New York to finish the job in the future by eliminating completely the lower tipped wage, as the Cuomo administration wage order calls for evaluating.

"As a recent *New York Times* [editorial](#) explained, the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers only survives 'because of the strength of the restaurant lobby.' Around the country, raising the tipped minimum wage has proven [effective](#) in reducing poverty among tipped workers without slowing job growth or reducing employment.

"In fact, the evidence demonstrates that the increase will be manageable for New York employers. In eight states, employers already pay a tipped wage higher than \$7.50 and are continuing to see strong restaurant job growth.

"While today's announcement is a major step forward addressing the low wages, high poverty rates, and unstable paychecks that are a way of life for this predominately female workforce, we hope that it is just the first step putting New York on its way toward eliminating this archaic and unjust sub-minimum wage."

For interviews with experts from NELP, please contact emmaS@berlinrosen.com.

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The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit www.nelp.org