

Minimum Wage Initiative Qualifies for 2004 Florida Ballot

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Minimum Wage Initiative Qualifies Appear on Florida Ballot in November

New York, NY -- A proposed constitutional amendment to create a state minimum wage in Florida starting at \$6.15 an hour – a dollar an hour above the current federal level – qualified for the November ballot on Tuesday. In its announcement, the state Division of Elections said that the initiative’s backers had submitted more than the 488,722 signatures required.

If approved by voters in November, the proposal would raise pay for 300,000 working Floridians who currently earn less than \$6.15 an hour. Analysts estimate that another 400,000 workers who make slightly more than \$6.15 will also see their pay increase.

The new minimum wage will also be indexed to inflation to ensure that rising prices do not erode its value over time.

“Close to one million Floridians signed the petition to place the

Minimum Wage Initiative on the ballot,” said Joe Johnson, campaign manager for the initiative. “Now, we’ll have an election, the foundation of democracy, to let voters decide whether working Floridians deserve more than \$5.15 an hour.”

The campaign is led by the national grassroots group ACORN, which has joined with the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law to push for higher minimum wages in cities and states across the country.

The federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour since 1997. It would be worth close to \$8.50 today if Congress had consistently updated it to keep pace with inflation since 1969.

If the initiative is approved by voters, Florida would become the first southern state to raise its minimum wage above the federal level. Twelve other states, the District of Columbia, and several cities have already stopped waiting for Congress and raised their minimum wages. Last week, the New York Legislature approved a bill that will add New York to this growing list if Gov. George Pataki signs it into law.

The Brennan Center drafted the initiative and, with pro bono lawyers from White & Case in Miami and Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler in New York, provided legal assistance to enable the initiative to qualify for the ballot. Earlier this month, the legal team won approval of the initiative by the Florida Supreme Court. In a 6-to-1 ruling, the court held that the initiative met all procedural requirements to appear on the ballot.

“Congress has let the federal minimum wage erode to the point of irrelevance,” said Brennan Center associate counsel Nathan Newman. “Floridians will now have the chance to act for themselves to ensure better wages and a better life for the state’s low-income families.”

The Brennan Center, a public policy and advocacy institute affiliated with NYU School of Law, promotes policies to expand access to good jobs for low-income families. The Center works with lawmakers and reform coalitions in cities and states across the country to design wage laws and other reform legislation tailored to local needs.

For more information, please contact Nathan Newman at (212) 992-8638 or visit the campaign's website at www.floridiansforall.org. For additional information on minimum wage and living wage legislation, please visit the Center's website at <http://www.brennancenter.org>.

For additional information on the Living Wage movement, please visit the Center's [Living Wage page](#).

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, founded in 1995, unites thinkers and advocates in pursuit of a vision of inclusive and effective democracy. Its mission is to develop and implement an innovative, nonpartisan agenda of scholarship, public education, and legal action that promotes equality and human dignity, while safeguarding fundamental freedoms. Please visit www.brennancenter.org.