

Minimum Wage Ballot Initiative Wins in Florida

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Miami, FL — Florida voters yesterday overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment creating a state minimum wage starting at \$6.15 an hour — a dollar above the current federal level. The new minimum wage will automatically increase each year with inflation to ensure that rising prices do not erode its value over time.

Yesterday's vote makes Florida the first sunbelt state to raise its minimum wage above the level of the federal minimum, which has been stuck at \$5.15 since 1997. Twelve other states, the District of Columbia, and several cities have already stopped waiting for Congress and raised their minimum wages. The federal minimum wage would be worth about \$8.70 today if Congress had consistently updated it to keep pace with inflation since 1968.

“This is a tremendous victory for Florida's working families,” said Brian Kettenring of ACORN which led the grassroots campaign for the minimum wage. “When it takes effect in six months, the new law

will raise pay for 300,000 working Floridians making 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 72%-28% vote in Florida shows that public support for raising the minimum wage extends to Red States as well as Blue States,” said Brennan Center associate counsel Nathan Newman. “Across the country, there’s a growing sense that the minimum wage needs to be raised and indexed to inflation to protect working families.”

The Brennan Center drafted the Florida minimum wage 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. Economic analysis for the Florida campaign was provided by the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts, and by the Economic Policy Institute.

With its new law, Florida joins Washington and Oregon as the third state nationally to index its minimum wage rate for inflation — an important new trend that more states may consider in the future. Voters in Nevada yesterday approved a similar constitutional amendment to raise the state minimum wage and index it to inflation. That measure must be voted on a second time in 2006 before it becomes law.

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 Florida campaign’s website at www.floridiansforall.org. For additional information on minimum

wage and living wage legislation, please visit the Center's [living wage](#) webpage.

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.