

Madison, Wisconsin Kicks Off Campaign for \$7.75 City Minimum Wage

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Madison Kicks-Off Campaign for \$7.75 City Minimum Wage Ordinance

National Trend Towards Broader Local Wage Laws Continues

Madison, Wisconsin -- This weekend elected officials and community activists in Madison launched a campaign to enact a city ordinance raising the minimum wage in Madison to \$7.75 an hour. If approved by voters next year, Madison would join Santa Fe, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. in moving to adopt a broad local wage ordinance to help low-wage workers in their communities make ends meet.

“The \$5.15 federal minimum wage is an embarrassment,” says campaign co-chair, Wisconsin State Representative Terese Berceau. “Washington has abdicated its responsibility for helping working people help themselves. Cities like Madison and the states have to stand up for family-supporting wages.”

Like 109 other cities and counties across the United States, in 1999 Madison enacted a living wage ordinance establishing a higher minimum wage for workers at businesses receiving city contracts or business subsidies. Now, like a growing number of cities, Madison is looking to extend its wage ordinance to private employers in order to help more low-income workers. Santa Fe enacted a broad city wage ordinance in February, and San Francisco voters will decide on November 4th whether to adopt a similar law. Both set the minimum wage at \$8.50 an hour. Washington, D.C. has had a city minimum wage law for many years set at \$6.15 an hour.

“Madison and Dane County have been real leaders in helping working families with their living wage ordinances,” explains campaign coordinator Joe Lindstrom of the Madison Poverty Action Network. “A broader minimum wage to help more Madisonians is the right next step for our community.”

The coalition is kicking off a grass-roots drive to gather more than 12,000 signatures to qualify the ordinance as a voter initiative on the February 17, 2004 Presidential primary election ballot.

“We applaud Governor Doyle’s courageous call to raise the state minimum wage,” says campaign co-chair, Wisconsin State Representative Mark Pocan. “But that’s not enough for Madison. The cost of living here is higher than in the rest of Wisconsin. Madison really needs its own minimum wage.”

“What we’re seeing is the next wave of the living wage movement as more cities extend their wage ordinances to cover private sector businesses,” says Brennan Center associate counsel Paul Sonn. “It’s an attractive option because these broader wage laws offer a way to help more struggling families but don’t involve new costs for cash-strapped city budgets.”

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Amanda Cooper at the Brennan Center in New York at 212.998.6736 or Joe Lindstrom at the Madison Poverty Action Network at 608.345.6026. Information is also available online within our [living wage section](#).