

Madison, Wisconsin Passes Minimum Wage Law

Issue: [Related Issue](#)

For Immediate Release

March 31, 2004

Contact Information:

Natalia Kennedy, 212 998-6736

Madison Passes Minimum Wage Law

National Trend Grows as Fourth City Celebrates Victory for Fair Wages

Madison, WI -- To the cheers of supporters, early this morning the Madison Common Council voted 12 to 7 to enact a local ordinance raising the minimum wage for an estimated 17,000 low-income workers in the community. With the new law, Madison joins Santa Fe, San Francisco and Washington D.C. as the fourth U.S. city to raise the minimum wage at the local level.

“This is a great victory for Madison’s working families,” says Alderperson Austin King, lead sponsor of the minimum wage ordinance.”

“We’re pleased that Madison has come together to support dignity in the workplace with livable wages,” says Pastor Calvin Harfst of the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice. “We encourage other communities to do the same.”

The Madison ordinance, which takes effect in 2005, will raise the minimum wage to \$7.75 by 2008 and then increase it each year to keep pace with inflation. The federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour since 1997.

“Madison is part of a growing national movement,” says Paul Sonn, Associate Counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice. “Washington has abdicated its responsibility for helping working families by refusing to raise the minimum wage. Cities like Madison and the states are being forced to step in.”

Over the past decade, Madison and more than 100 cities enacted narrower “living wage” ordinances that increase the minimum wage for workers at businesses that receiving city contracts or tax breaks. Now cities like Madison are broadening these laws to help more working families. The Brennan Center, a public policy center at NYU School of law, advised Madison lawmakers in connection with new ordinance and is helping cities and states across the country raise the minimum wage.

“Madison’s cost of living is substantially higher than the national and state average,” says Jim Cavanaugh, President of the South Central Wisconsin Federation of Labor. “It is essential that our workers have the resources to survive in this city and we applaud the citizens of Madison for recognizing that need.”

For more information, please contact Natalia Kennedy at (212) 998-6736. For additional information on minimum wage and living wage legislation, please visit the Center's [Living Wage](#) page.