

Wisconsin Governor Rejects Ban on City Minimum Wage Laws

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Wisconsin Governor Rejects Ban on City Minimum Wages

Veto clears way for passage of Madison ordinance

Madison, WI -- Vetoing proposed legislation that would have barred cities in Wisconsin from enacting local laws to raise the minimum wage, Governor Jim Doyle yesterday cleared the path for a proposed Madison ordinance establishing a \$7.75 minimum wage for more than 11,000 low-paid workers in that city. If the measure is approved by the Madison Common Council this spring, Madison will join Santa Fe, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. as the fourth American city to protect its residents in this way.

“We’re delighted the Governor has blocked this attempt to tie the hands of cities seeking to help their most vulnerable workers,” said Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz who is sponsoring the local ordinance. “The cost of living in Madison is one of the highest in the state. We need the

flexibility to enact a minimum wage to help the working poor who are struggling to get by in our community.”

The rejected bill was widely viewed as an assault by business interests on local government authority and was vigorously opposed by scores of state and local lawmakers, the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, and community and labor advocates.

“The Governor’s veto is good news,” said Jim Cavanaugh, president of the South Central Federation of Labor. “We hope the Common Council will now act quickly to finalize this badly needed minimum wage increase for Madison’s working poor.”

Like more than 110 other communities across the country, Madison in 1999 enacted a “living wage” law establishing a higher minimum wage for businesses receiving city contracts or business subsidies. The proposed law would help more low-income workers by extending the minimum wage to employees of all local businesses.

“The minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 for seven years and Washington shows no sign of responding,” said Madison Alderman Austin King, a leader of the campaign for the ordinance. “It’s crucial that the Common Council move quickly to end that delay by enacting a minimum wage that’s adequate for Madison and by indexing it to inflation to keep it relevant.”

“Madison’s Common Council will be sending a powerful message of support to Madison’s most vulnerable workers,” said Vicky Selkove of Madison’s Economic Justice Institute. “The passage of this ordinance will tell these workers that their contributions matter enormously and that they deserve to earn a decent wage.”

The Brennan Center is advising policymakers in Madison in connection with proposed minimum wage ordinance and has provided

technical assistance to other communities including Santa Fe and San Francisco that have adopted similar legislation.

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