

Fight for \$15 Impact Report:

Raises for 17 Million Workers, 10 Million Going to \$15

Summary

The strikes taking place on April 14, 2016 mark three-and-one-half years since fast-food workers in New York launched the Fight for \$15, focusing national attention on widening inequality and setting off a wave of action in various forms to raise wages. This report by the National Employment Law Project quantifies the impact that this movement has had to date on wages in the United States.

The key findings are the following:

- **Since November 2012, nearly 17 million workers throughout the country have earned wage increases** through a combination of states and cities raising their minimum wages; executive orders by city, state, and federal leaders; and individual companies raising their pay scales.
- Of those workers, **nearly 10 million—59 percent—will receive gradual raises to \$15 per hour**, cementing \$15 as the national benchmark for strong action on wages, and beginning to reverse decades of growing wage inequality.
- Most of those 10 million workers are receiving raises as a result of the **landmark \$15 state minimum wages that California and New York approved last month**. Under those increases, **more than 1 in 3 workers in both states will receive raises of about \$4,000 per year** once they are phased in.
- This wave of action is **historic in scale**. **Fifty-one states and cities** have raised the minimum wage since 2012—more than ever before in U.S. history.
- States and cities are delivering **larger raises for a broader segment of the workforce** than the United States has seen in 50 years. While the new \$15 state wages in California and New York will raise pay for **more than one-third of workers**, the last federal minimum wage increase to \$7.25 in 2009 raised pay for **only 10 percent of the workforce**.

Findings

The U.S. economy has tilted so far towards low-paying jobs that today 42 percent of America's workers earn less than \$15 per hour.¹ In November 2012, when fast-food workers first went on strike launching the Fight for \$15, they helped make the issue of income inequality and falling paychecks one of the nation's top economic issues. Since then, unprecedented numbers of states, cities, and individual employers have taken action to raise wages.

- **Since 2012, states, cities, the Obama Administration, and scores of private employers have raised pay for 17 million workers.**
- **Nearly 10 million of these workers—59 percent—will receive gradual raises to \$15** as a result of the Fight for \$15.
 - **8.8 million through state \$15 wage increases**—chiefly the historic increases approved by California and New York last month. See Table 1.
 - **863,000 through city \$15 wage increases**—such as those that Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other cities approved over the past three years. See Table 1.
 - **And 88,000 through voluntary action by private employers such as Facebook, Aetna, and Nationwide Insurance** that have raised pay scales to \$15 or more for their employees or employees of their contractors. See Table 3.²
- **The other 7 million workers are receiving raises to levels below \$15.**
 - **5 million through state and city wage increases to less than \$15**—15 states and 24 localities have approved raises to less than \$15 since 2012.
 - **1.7 million through voluntary action by private employers**—including 1.3 million alone at McDonalds and Walmart, which announced modest raises to \$10.³ Other retailers and food industry giants, including The Gap, Ikea, Target, and Starbucks, followed with similar raises. And high-road leader Costco raised its starting pay to \$13. See Table 3.
 - **200,000 through President Obama's minimum wage executive order**—which raised pay to \$10.10 for employees of federal contractors. See Table 2.

- This wave of action is **historic in scale** and is beginning to **reverse decades of growing wage inequality**.
 - **A record 51 states and cities have raised their minimum wages since 2012—far more than ever before in U.S. history.** By contrast, in the years leading up to the last federal minimum wage increase in 2007, just 33 states and cities raised their wages.⁴
 - These are the **most significant minimum wage increases** that the nation has seen since Harry Truman nearly doubled the U.S. minimum wage in 1950.⁵ The landmark California and New York \$15 minimum wages will **raise pay broadly for more than 1 in 3 workers in the two states by about \$4,000 per year.**⁶ That's **more than three times the share** of workers that received raises under the last federal minimum wage increase. That increase to \$7.25 in 2009 raised pay for just 10 percent of the workforce—a small segment of workers at the very bottom.⁷
 - **Nearly a dozen campaigns for \$15 minimum wages are currently underway** across the country, including in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Minneapolis, and Montgomery County, Maryland, among others.⁸
 - **In Congress, support for a \$15 minimum wage has been growing steadily,** with a broad array of Democrats, including Kirsten Gillibrand, Dick Durbin, Chris Van Hollen, Elizabeth Warren, Sherrod Brown, and 47 other members of the House and Senate, joining Bernie Sanders to co-sponsor a \$15 federal minimum wage.⁹

Table 1: \$15 Minimum Wage Increases Since Nov. 2012⁸

Jurisdiction	Wage and Phase-In Schedule	Workers Affected
California	\$15.00 (2022-2023)	5,647,000 ⁶
New York	\$15.00 (2019-2020 NYC; 2022 Long Island & Westchester County); \$12.50 (2021 Upstate, projected to phase up to \$15 by 2023)	3,100,000 ⁶
Massachusetts (Medicaid home care workers)	\$15.00 (2018)	35,000 ¹⁰
New York (fast food)	\$15.00 (Dec. 2018 NYC; July 2021 statewide)	(included in NY total)
New York (state workers)	\$15.00 (Dec. 2018 NYC; July 2021 statewide)	(included in NY total)
New York (state universities & colleges)	\$15.00 (2018-2021)	(included in NY total)
State Subtotal		8,782,000
Los Angeles City, CA	\$15.00 (2020)	609,000 ¹¹
Los Angeles County, CA	\$15.00 (2020-2021)	(included in CA total)
San Francisco, CA	\$15.00 (2018)	143,000 ¹²
Mountain View, CA	\$15.00 (2018)	(included in CA total)
Emeryville, CA	\$15.00 (2018)	(included in CA total)
Santa Monica, CA	\$15.00 (2020-2021); \$15.37 (2017 for hotels, motels & businesses within them)	(included in CA total)
Sonoma County, CA (city contractors)	\$15.00 (2016-2020)	(included in CA total)
El Cerrito, CA	\$15.00 (2019)	(included in CA total)
Seattle, WA	\$15.00 (2017-2021)	102,000
SeaTac, WA	\$15.00 (2014)	6,300
New York, NY (city workers & non-profit human services contractors)	\$15.00 (2018)	(included in NY total)
Syracuse, NY (city workers)	\$15.00 (2020)	(included in NY total)
Buffalo, NY (city workers)	\$15.00 (2021)	(included in NY total)

Rochester, NY (city workers)	\$15.00 (2021)	(included in NY total)
Pittsburgh, PA (city workers)	\$15.00 (2021)	300
Portland, OR (city workers)	\$15.00 (2015)	175
Greensboro, NC (city workers)	\$15.00 (2020)	245
Missoula, MT (city workers)	\$15.00 (2018)	16
Jersey City, NJ (city workers)	\$15.00 (2016)	500
East Orange, NJ (city workers)	\$15.00 (2018)	158
Bloomfield, NJ (city workers)	\$15.00	400
Milwaukie, OR (city workers)	\$15.00	no estimate
Newark, NJ (city workers)	\$15.00 (2018)	no estimate
San Marcos, TX (employees of businesses receiving tax incentives)	\$15.00 (2016)	no estimate
Local Subtotal		863,094
State and Local Total		9,645,094

Table 2: Minimum Wage Increases Below \$15 Since Nov. 2012¹³

Jurisdiction	Wage and Phase-In Schedule	Workers Affected
Arkansas	\$8.50 (2017)	44,000
Alaska	\$9.75 (2016)	48,000
Connecticut	\$10.10 (2017)	227,000
Delaware	\$8.25 (2015)	40,000
Hawaii	\$10.10 (2018)	99,000
Maryland	\$10.10 (2018)	455,000
Michigan	\$9.25 (2018)	1,000,000
Minnesota	\$9.50 (2016)	356,800
Nebraska	\$9.00 (2016)	146,000
New Jersey	\$8.25 (2015)	429,000
Oregon	\$12.50, \$13.50, \$14.75 (20122)	623,300
Rhode Island	\$9.00 (2015)	12,000
South Dakota	\$8.50 (2015)	64,000
Vermont	\$10.50 (2018)	57,000
West Virginia	\$8.75 (2016)	114,000
State Subtotal		4,320,100
Chicago, IL	\$13.00 (2019)	410,000
Tacoma, WA	\$12.00 (2018)	55,400
Bernalillo County, NM	\$8.50 (2014)	10,000
Las Cruces, NM	\$10.10 (2019)	17,500
Santa Fe County, NM	\$10.66 (2014)	28,000
Portland, ME	\$10.68 (2017)	13,200
Bangor, ME	\$9.75 (2019)	4,000
Johnson County, IA	\$10.10 (2017)	14,600
Washington, DC	\$11.50 (2016)	40,000
Lexington, KY	\$10.10 (2018)	41,000 ¹⁴
Montgomery County, MD	\$11.50 (2017)	80,000
Prince George's County, MD	\$11.50 (2017)	Unknown
Louisville, KY	\$9.00 (2017)	(not in force; court challenge)
Richmond, CA	\$13.00 (2018)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Berkeley, CA	\$12.53 (2016)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Oakland, CA	\$12.25 (2015)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Sunnyvale, CA	\$10.30 (2015)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Palo Alto, CA	\$11.00 (2016)	(included in CA total, Table 1)

Sacramento, CA	\$12.50 (2020)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Long Beach, CA	\$13.00 (2019)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Santa Clara, CA	\$11.00 (2016)	(included in CA total, Table 1)
Kansas City, MO	\$13.00 (2020)	(not in force; court challenge)
St. Louis, MO	\$11.00 (2018)	(not in force; court challenge)
Birmingham, AL	\$10.10 (2017)	(not in force; blocked by state legislature)
Local Subtotal		713,700
Obama Executive Order for Federal Contractors	\$10.10 (2015)	200,000 ¹⁵
Federal Subtotal		200,000
Under \$15 Total		5,233,800

Table 3: Employers Voluntarily Raising Pay¹⁶

Employer & State	Wage & Phase-In Year	Type of Policy	Workers Affected
Minimum Pay of Approx. \$15 or More			
University of California	\$15.00 (2017)	Company Policy – Univ. Employees and Contractors	3,200
C1 Bank (FL)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	30
First Green Bank	\$14.90 (2015)	Company Policy	10
JM Family Enterprises (FL)	\$16.00 (2015)	Company Policy	1,000
John Hopkins Hospital (MD)	\$15.00 (2017)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	2,000
Lynn Community Center (MA)	\$15.00 (2016)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	550
Curriculum Associates (MA)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	22
Boston Medical Center (MA)	\$15.12 (2016)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	200
Tufts Medical Center (MA)	\$15.00 (2017)	Company Policy	225
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (MA)	\$15.00 (2016)	Company Policy	850
Bridj (MA)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	40
Moo Cluck Moo (MI)	\$15.00 (2013)	Company Policy	20
Alina Health Hospitals (MN)	\$15.00 (2018)	Collective Bargaining Agreement – Service workers	3,000
University of Minnesota (MN)	\$15.00	Collective Bargaining Agreement – Clerical workers	1,500
University of Rochester Medical Center (NY)	\$15.00 (2017)	Collective Bargaining Agreement – Service workers	1,700
Hudson River Healthcare (NY)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	180
Hello Alfred (NY)	\$18.00 (2016)	Company Policy	100
Ruby Receptionists (OR)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	150
Duquesne University (PA)	\$16.00 (2015)	Company Policy	100
Washington Hospital (PA)	\$15.00	Collective Bargaining Agreement	400
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (PA)	\$15.00 (2021)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	10,000
Golden Living, Genesis Healthcare & Oak Health (PA)	\$15.00	Collective Bargaining Agreement	5,000
Seattle Central Co-Op Grocery Store (WA)	\$15.36 (2015)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	125

University of Washington (WA)	\$15.00 (2017)	Company Policy	5,500
Aetna	\$16.00 (2015)	Company Policy	15,700
Amalgamated Bank	\$15.00 (2015)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	425
Endurance International Group	\$14.00 (2015)	Company Policy	1,500
Nationwide Mutual Insurance	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy	900
Internet Truck Stop (ID)	\$15.00	Company Policy	110
Washington Home Care Workers (WA)	\$15.40 (2017)	Collective Bargaining Agreement	33,000
Facebook (CA)	\$15.00 (2015)	Company Policy – Contractors	Unknown
Maple (NY)	\$14.00	Company Policy	Unknown
New York University (NY)	\$15.00 (2019)	Company Policy – Students	Unknown
Columbia University (NY)	\$15.00 (2019)	Company Policy – Students	Unknown
Private Employers Paying \$15+ Subtotal			87,537
Other Pay Increase			
Missouri home care workers	\$10.15	Collective Bargaining Agreement	10,000
McDonald's	\$10.00 (2016)	Company Policy – Corp. Owned Stores	90,000
Walmart	\$10.00 (2016)	Company Policy	1,200,000
TJX Companies (TJ Maxx, Marshalls, HomeGoods, Sierra Trading Post)	\$10.00 (2016)	Company Policy	79,200
Gap Inc.	\$10.00 (2015)	Company Policy	65,000
Ikea	\$10.76 (2015)	Company Policy	5,500
Target	\$9.00 (2015)	Company Policy	76,200
Starbucks	Varies (2015)	Company Policy	50,000
Costco	\$13.00 or \$13.50 (2016)	Company Policy	67,600
California State University	Varies	Collective Bargaining Agreement	26,000
Private Employers Offering Other Pay Increase Subtotal			1,669,500
Private Employer Total			1,757,037

Endnotes

- ¹ National Employment Law Project, *The Growing Movement for \$15*, November 2015, <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/Growing-Movement-for-15-Dollars.pdf>
- ² National Employment Law Project, *The Fight for \$15: Existing High Dollar Value Minimum Wage - Employers Chart*, April 2016, <http://raisetheminimumwage.org/pages/movement-for-15>.
- ³ Walmart, *More Than One Million Walmart Associates to Receive Pay Increase in 2016*, Jan. 20, 2016, <http://news.walmart.com/news-archive/2016/01/20/more-than-one-million-walmart-associates-receive-pay-increase-in-2016>; and Heesun Wee, “Fight for \$15: McDonald’s Workers Protest to Raise Minimum Wage,” *CNBC*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/04/15/fight-for-15-mcdonalds-workers-protest-to-raise-minimum-wage.html>.
- ⁴ As of 2007, 29 states and the District of Columbia had raised their minimum wages above the federal level. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, *Changes in Basic Minimum Wages in Non-Farm Employment Under State Law: Selected Years 1968 To 2016*, <http://www.dol.gov/whd/state/stateminwagehis.htm>. In addition, three cities – San Francisco, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque – raised their wages at the city level.
- ⁵ Teresa Tritch, *When Harry Truman Nearly Doubled the Minimum Wage*, N.Y. Times, February 17, 2016, <http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/author/teresa-tritch/>
- ⁶ Ken Jacobs and Ian Perry, *\$15 Minimum Wage in California: Who Would be Affected by the Proposal to Raise California’s Minimum Wage?*, Center for Labor Research & Education, University of California-Berkeley, March 2016, <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/15-minimum-wage-in-california/>; David Cooper, *Raising the New York state minimum wage to \$15 by July 2021 would lift wages for 3.2 million workers*, Economic Policy Institute, January 2016, <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-new-york-state-minimum-wage-to-15/>
- ⁷ Economic Policy Institute, *Minimum Wage Issue Guide*, August 2008, http://epi.3cdn.net/1010456170680f8fc7_lem6b99v9.pdf
- ⁸ National Employment Law Project, *\$15 Laws and Current Campaigns*, RaiseTheMinimumWage.com, <http://raisetheminimumwage.org/pages/15-Laws-Current-Campaigns>.
- ⁹S.B. 1832, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1832/cosponsors>; H.R. 3164, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3164/cosponsors>
- ¹⁰ Dave Jamieson, “Massachusetts Home Care Workers Win Fight For \$15,” *Huffington Post*, June 26, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/26/home-care-workers-15_n_7673128.html.
- ¹¹ Michael Reich, Ken Jacobs, Annette Bernhardt and Ian Perry, *The Proposed Minimum Wage Law for Los Angeles: Economic Impacts and Policy Options*, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California-Berkeley, March 2015, <http://irle.berkeley.edu/cwed/briefs/2015-01.pdf>.
- ¹² Ken Jacobs and Ian Perry, *\$15 Minimum Wage in California: Who Would be Affected by the Proposal to Raise California’s Minimum Wage?*, Center for Labor Research & Education, University of California-Berkeley, March 2016, <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/15-minimum-wage-in-california/>
- ¹³ For list of jurisdictions, wage and phase-in schedule, see National Employment Law Project, *Recent State Minimum Wage Laws and Current Campaigns*, <http://www.raisetheminimumwage.com/pages/state-minimum-wage>; and *Local Minimum Wage Laws and Current Campaigns*, RaiseTheMinimumWage.com, <http://www.raisetheminimumwage.com/pages/local-minimum-wage>. Worker impact estimates from Fight for \$15.
- ¹⁴ Jason Bailey, *Who Stands to Benefit from Lexington’s New Minimum Wage*, November 20, 2015, <http://kypolicy.org/who-stands-to-benefit-from-lexingtons-new-minimum-wage/>.
- ¹⁵ Eric Katz, “200K Federal Contractors Are About to Get a Pay Raise,” *Government Executive*, October 7, 2014, <http://www.govexec.com/contracting/2014/10/200k-federal-contractors-are-about-get-pay-raise/95969/>.
- ¹⁶ For list of employers paying \$15 or more, see National Employment Law Project, *The Fight for \$15: Existing High Dollar Value Minimum Wage - Employers Chart*, <http://raisetheminimumwage.org/pages/movement-for-15>. Worker impact estimates from Fight for \$15.