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Jersey City Council Endorses a \$15 an Hour Minimum Wage for NJ

Endorsement comes on national Fight for \$15 Day of Action, follows Hudson and Essex Freeholder endorsements in September

JERSEY CITY – On a national day of action in the Fight for \$15, the Jersey City Council passed a resolution calling on the New Jersey Legislature and Governor Christie to enact a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The resolution, which also endorses the right of all workers to organize and form a union, was praised by workers, labor leaders and advocates from around New Jersey and gives additional momentum to the fight to raise the wage statewide. It follows endorsements from the Essex and Hudson County Boards of Chosen Freeholders last month.

At a celebratory rally held before the Council meeting, Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop said the following: “In New Jersey, a minimum-wage worker has to work more than 13 hours a day, 7 days a week just to afford the cost of living. That’s wrong. We absolutely must raise the minimum wage.”

“For too long, working families have been held back by stagnant wages and rules made for the 1%. Today, we have massive income inequality, and Americans feel desperate about their future,” Council President Rolando R. Lavarro, Jr. said. “With tonight’s vote, the Council stands firmly on the side of restoring the dignity of working families and making sure everyone gets a fair shake at the American Dream.”

Despite being one of the highest cost states in the country, the New Jersey the minimum wage is just \$8.38, a little more than a dollar above the federal floor of \$7.25. Though the recent increase indexed the minimum wage to inflation, the State Department of Labor announced in September that workers will see no increase in 2016.

“The Jersey City Council just took a big stand in the fight to ensure family sustaining wages for everyone who works in New Jersey,” said Analilia Mejia, executive director of New Jersey Working Families. “Across the state, elected leaders are hearing and heeding the call of airport workers, child and elder care workers, fast food workers and more who demand a fair wage and a fair shot at the American Dream. The Fight for \$15 has arrived in New Jersey, and we won’t stop until we win.”

New Jersey has become a major front in the fight for higher wages and workers rights thanks to robust union organizing campaigns and grassroots activism around progressive policies. In 2013 voters overwhelmingly approved a minimum wage increase from \$7.25 to \$8.25. In September 2013 Jersey City became the first city to pass a bill that guaranteed workers right to earn paid sick days. Nine cities have followed Jersey City since 2009, and just recently Jersey City expanded its paid sick days ordinance to include nearly all private sector workers.

“We commend Jersey City officials for taking a stand for working families by approving this resolution,” said Kevin Brown, 32BJ Vice President and NJ State Director. “But our fight doesn't stop here because we need state and federal lawmakers to do their part and support legislation calling for a \$15 minimum wage. A living wage will benefit workers and the economy. This is how we will raise America, with good jobs, so hardworking men and women can help lift themselves and their families out of poverty and give their children a bright future.”

According to a [report](#) from the United Way of Northern New Jersey, a single New Jerseyan with no children would need to earn \$13.78 just to make basic needs like food and shelter, and \$19.73 to achieve basic economic stability.

“Too many American workers—whether they work at America’s ports, in fast-food, Walmart, child care, T-Mobile, home care, manufacturing, airports, federal contracts, colleges, grocery, agriculture and others—are paid too little to support our families,” said Gabriel Porcel, an XPO Port Driver. “All American workers deserve a life where we can meet our basic needs and raise our families with dignity.”

What began as an organizing campaign by fast food workers in New York City has quickly transformed into a nationwide movement for a genuine living wage that has won concessions from multinational corporations like Walmart and McDonalds and prompted Seattle to become the first city in the country to chart a course for a \$15 minimum wage. San Francisco quickly followed, and in September 2015 Governor Andrew Cuomo announced he was raising the minimum wage of fast food workers to \$15 an hour and would make a major push for an across the board \$15 an hour minimum wage in New York State.

“When 15 Now became \$15 WON in Seattle, working people around the country saw clearly what’s possible if we stand and fight,” said Meghan Brophy, spokesperson for 15 Now NJ. “In Philadelphia and Minneapolis, in Mobile, Alabama and Portland, Oregon, the movement for a \$15 per hour minimum wage just keeps growing. New Jersey is one of the most expensive places in the country to live. Enough is enough! It’s working people like us who make this state run every day, and we need a raise.”