



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Rallies for Minimum Wage Increase, Urges Albany to Raise the People's Pay

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY January 11, 2013

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*State lawmakers Kennedy, Peoples-Stokes, Ryan support measures to raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.75 an hour and linking future increases to the Consumer Price Index.*

*Kennedy: Now's the Time to Raise the Minimum Wage, and Stop Playing Paycheck Roulette by Linking Future Increases to CPI.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – With income inequality expanding and too many families struggling with low and stagnant wages, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is working to build public support behind efforts to raise the minimum wage. Over 100 people joined Kennedy at a rally Friday morning at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center to urge Albany to finally take action on legislation to boost the minimum wage. Kennedy calls the minimum wage hike a “critical measure to lift families from poverty and boost the local economy.”

“The current minimum wage just doesn't cut it for local families. At \$7.25 an hour, it's just \$290 each week and less than \$15,000 a year for full-time work. That's simply not enough to put food on the table and raise a family,” Kennedy said. “Raising the minimum wage will help lift families from poverty, and it will reduce the strain on safety-net programs caused by inadequate wages. An increase in the minimum wage will also act as an economic stimulus, since more families will have greater purchasing power, spending their higher wages at local small businesses.

“It's time for New York State to do what's right for workers, families and businesses in our community. Raise the minimum wage, and stop playing paycheck roulette – link future increases to the Consumer Price Index,” Kennedy added.

Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes and Assemblyman Sean Ryan join Kennedy in firm support of the minimum wage increase.

“I am in full support of raising the minimum wage and tying it to the Cost of Living Index,” said Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes. “This is something that is long overdue; I look forward to passing this legislation to help out New Yorkers day to day everywhere.”

“We must act during this legislative session to increase the minimum wage in New York and index it to adjust to the cost of living,” said Assemblyman Sean Ryan. “Many other states have already increased their minimum wage beyond \$7.25 and New York is falling behind. I

am thankful that Governor Cuomo is aggressively pushing for action, and I am hopeful that all legislators will do what is right for people who are struggling to make ends meet throughout Buffalo and Western New York.”

The lawmakers support proposals to increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.75 an hour. About 1 million workers – which is about 11 percent of the state’s entire workforce – will see a positive benefit in their paychecks when the minimum wage is raised to \$8.75. In Erie County alone, 71,400 workers will benefit from this wage increase.

At the current minimum wage, a family of two – one full-time, minimum-wage earner and a dependent – barely earns enough to live above the federal poverty line. Kennedy also supports linking the minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which would help maintain the purchasing power of minimum-wage households.

At the rally Friday, the state lawmakers were joined by Buffalo City Council members Richard Fontana, Bonnie Russell and Chris Scanlon; Jonathon Welch, founder of Talking Leaves Book Store; Sister Mary McCarrick, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, who spoke on behalf of Bishop Richard Malone; Pastor Mark Blue, president of the Baptist Ministers Conference; Richard Lipsitz, president of the WNY Area Labor Federation; Sam Magavern, co-director of the Partnership for Public Good; and Duane Diggs and Bill Roberts of VOICE Buffalo. All discussed their support for raising the minimum wage. In addition, over 100 community activists, faith-based leaders and local residents rallied to boost the wage floor.

A sign was posted on the podium at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center that read, “Raise the people’s pay!” Below that, it displayed the twitter hashtag, “#raisethewage”. Kennedy is encouraging wage hike supporters to use the hashtag when tweeting about the need to increase the minimum wage.

The Fiscal Policy Institute estimates the ripple effects of increasing the minimum wage would be substantial enough to create approximately 7,500 new jobs in New York State. Kennedy explained higher wages will be reinvested directly into the local economy, as minimum-wage earners put their larger pay checks to work buying food, clothing or other necessities for their families. When the minimum wage increases by a dollar, it results in \$2,800 in new spending by minimum-wage households over the following year, according to a study from the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

For nearly 20 years (1962-1979), the state's minimum wage meant approximately 108 percent of the federal poverty line for a family of three. The current \$7.25 hourly rate translates into just 82 percent of the federal poverty level for that same family.

With about 46.8 percent of Buffalo children living in poverty, Kennedy says a higher minimum wage will serve a necessary tool to help reduce poverty and fight hunger locally and across the state.

In addition to Kennedy, Peoples-Stokes and Ryan, Democrats in the Senate and Assembly stand united in the fight to raise the minimum wage to a new level that will help improve the quality of life for minimum-wage households across the state.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and most of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*