



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

NYS Black, Puerto-Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus Members Call for Passage of Minimum Wage Increase

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON February 13, 2013

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Citing overwhelming support and outsize need for higher wages in communities of color, lawmakers seek hike to \$8.75, plus indexing to inflation

ALBANY — Members of the Black, Puerto-Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus called Tuesday for the state Legislature to raise the minimum wage to \$8.75 and allow for annual increases to keep up with the rising cost of living. Workers of color are the majority of minimum-wage workers in New York State. More than half of the 1.5 million New Yorkers who would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage are Black, Latino or Asian.

“Economic disparities hit communities of color particularly hard,” said Assemblyman Karim Camara (D-Brooklyn), Chairman of the NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus. “Raising the minimum wage will boost consumer spending, create jobs and improve quality of life in communities of color all across the state. It is the Caucus’ top priority in this year’s state budget.”

“Governor Cuomo was right when he said that \$7.25 an hour is ‘unlivable,’” said Assemblyman Felix Ortiz (D-Brooklyn), Chairman of the NYS Puerto-Rican and Hispanic Task Force. “It’s high time lawmakers did something about that. A raise for the state’s lowest-paid workers is long overdue.”

Chairmen Camara and Ortiz were joined by their colleagues Assemblymembers Keith Wright (D-Manhattan), Samuel Roberts (D-Syracuse), Vanessa Gibson (D-Bronx), Walter Mosley (D-Brooklyn), Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D-Erie, Buffalo), Gabriela Rosa (D-Upper Manhattan), Rafael Espinal (D-Brooklyn) and Senators Gustavo Rivera (D-Bronx), Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn), Jose Peralta (D-Queens), Adriano Espaillat (D-Upper Manhattan) and Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn).

In 2011, Black women in New York working full time made only 67 cents -- and Hispanic women only 54 cents -- for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts. Also that year, 28 percent of black families with children were in poverty and 32 percent of Hispanic families with children were in poverty. Nearly one million children throughout New York have a parent who would benefit from raising the state's minimum wage to \$8.75.

Of the more than 1.5 million workers who earn minimum wage in New York, about 794,000 are people of color. Twenty-five percent (393,000 workers) are Hispanic; 14 percent (225,600 workers) are African American; and 12 percent (175,300 are Asian and other people of color.

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-Westchester/Bronx) said: "Working class New Yorkers deserve every possibility to be able to thrive in this very difficult economy. We need to raise the minimum wage to at least \$8.75 and index it to inflation to make sure that all workers are ensured an actual living wage."

Senator Gustavo Rivera (D- Bronx) said: "\$7.25 is the minimum allowed by federal law. New York should not be at the bottom of the pay scale. It should be leading the way in creating good jobs that families can live on. That's why my colleagues and I have made raising the minimum wage to \$8.75 and indexing it to inflation our No. 1 goal in this budget."

"At \$7.25 per hour, New York's minimum wage is decades out of date and leaves full-time workers stuck in poverty," said Assemblyman Keith Wright (D-Manhattan). "Albany has not raised the wage since 2006. Albany needs to get off the dime and, in this case, raise the wage a simple 15 dimes."

The New York State Minimum Wage Coalition is a collection of labor, community, policy and religious groups pushing Albany to raise the minimum wage. It includes the National Employment Law Project (NELP), ALIGN, Businesses for a Fair Minimum Wage, Central New York Labor Federation (CNY), Center for Popular Democracy, Citizen Action of New York, Coalition for Economic Justice (WNY), Communications Workers of America, Community Voices Heard, Fight for Fair Economy Table (WNY), Fiscal Policy Institute; Gamaliel of New York (Upstate), Hudson Valley Community Coalition, Hunger Action Network, Latino Pastoral Action Center, Laundry Workers Center United, Long Island Jobs with Justice (Long Island), Make the Road New York, Metro Justice (Greater Rochester), Micah Institute at the New York Theological Seminary (NYC), Moms Rising, New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYC), New York Communities for Change, New York State Council of Churches, New York State Episcopal Public Policy Network, New York State Interfaith Impact, New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, Occupy Albany (Albany), Occupy Faith (NYC), Retail Action Project, Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Local 338 (Long Island), Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, Service Employees International Union Local

32BJ, Service Employees International Union Local 1199, Service Employees International Union Local 200 (Upstate), Strong Economy for All, United Auto Workers, United Federation of Teachers, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1500, United NY, Uri L'Tzedek (Downstate), Worker Center of Central New York (CNY), Worker Justice Center of New York Working Families Party

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