



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Kennedy to Senate GOP: It's Time to Act on Minimum Wage

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 5, 2013

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*With Assembly Approving Minimum Wage Hike Today, Kennedy Urges Senate GOP Coalition to Allow the Legislation to Come to a Vote.*

*Kennedy: We Have the Votes to Raise the Minimum Wage. The Only Barrier Standing Between Working Families and Higher Wages is the Senate GOP Leadership.*

ALBANY, N.Y. – With the Assembly expected to approve legislation today to raise the minimum wage, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffero, is urging the Senate Republican leadership to allow the bill to come to the Senate floor for a vote. Kennedy says Democrats in the

Senate have the votes to pass the minimum wage legislation, but Senate Republican leaders must agree to let the bill receive an up-or-down vote from the full Senate.

“The votes are there to raise the minimum wage. The only barrier standing between working families and higher wages is the Senate Republican leadership,” Kennedy said. “With the Assembly’s approval of this minimum wage hike, there’s no reason for the Senate to wait. The Senate Majority Coalition must allow this legislation to come to the floor for a vote. The time is now to raise the minimum wage and help working families make ends meet.”

Some Senators have said they’d like to wait and see what happens with President Barack Obama’s minimum-wage proposal at the federal level. Ongoing gridlock in the nation’s capital seems to indicate they could be waiting for some time.

“Western New York's working families can't afford to wait for Washington. At the current \$7.25 hourly minimum, people earn just \$290 each week and less than \$15,000 a year for full-time work. It leaves families in Buffalo and across the state struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. When the minimum wage rises, it will help lift families from poverty and boost local economic activity. It will act as an economic stimulus by providing working-class families greater purchasing power to benefit small businesses. Let's raise the wage now and link future increases to keep up with rising costs of living.”

The measure expected to be approved in the Assembly mirrors President Obama’s proposal. It would raise the minimum wage to an hourly rate of \$9, and link future increases to the rate of inflation in order to keep up with constantly rising household costs like food, housing and transportation. Senator Kennedy cosponsors Senate proposals to raise the minimum wage.

In a letter sent last week to the Senate Coalition co-leaders, Senator Kennedy and fellow Senate Democrats vowed to provide all 27 of their votes to raise the minimum wage and index it to the rate of inflation. Senate Democrats say there are at least 32 votes – the magic number required to pass the bill through the Senate - citing the support of all 27 Democrats, in addition to a number of other Senators who have publicly stated their support.

The Fiscal Policy Institute estimates the ripple effects of increasing the minimum wage would be substantial enough to create over 7,000 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.

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.

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