



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Press Release: Senate Democratic Conference Announces Action On Minimum Wage

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS February 4, 2014

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Albany, NY - The Senate Democratic Conference on February 4th announced the introduction of three bills relating to the New York State minimum wage. These three pieces of legislation would enable local governments to raise the minimum wage in their localities, expedite the increase of the state's minimum wage, and end the corporate tax credit for employers who pay workers the minimum wage.

“Over 1.1 million hard working New Yorkers continue to struggle to make ends meet, despite having one or more jobs,” Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said.

“Failing to adequately raise the state’s minimum wage has hampered economic growth by severely limiting the purchasing power of families throughout New York State. The time for half-measures is over and I urge immediate action to immediately raise the minimum wage, end corporate tax breaks and provide greater authority to our state’s local governments to address the needs of their constituents.”

Senate Democratic Conference Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Hard working New Yorkers cannot wait for the wages we all agree they deserve. For too many in our state, current paychecks are not making ends meet. There is no reason to delay these measures, which are supported by a broad coalition of New Yorkers, and I call for immediate action to ensure that any New Yorkers working hard to support their families earn a wage that allows them to do so.”

In the 2014 State of the Union Address, President Obama called on every mayor, governor and state legislator not to wait for federal action but to take the initiative and raise the minimum wage, acknowledging that local governments may be best suited to address the minimum wage requirements of their constituents. The Senate Democratic Conference members have been long time advocates for a higher state minimum wage and have introduced legislation to empower local governments to raise the minimum wage in their localities, accelerate the increase of the state’s minimum wage, and end the minimum wage corporate tax credit.

Senate bill S.6156, introduced by Senate Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, will enable local municipalities within the State of New York to raise the minimum wage within their jurisdictions. This legislation would allow local governments with higher costs of living to address wages within their localities without waiting for state action. xx Senate bill S.6518, introduced by Senator Adriano Espaillat, will accelerate the increase in the state’s minimum wage as enacted in the 2013-2014 State Budget. This legislation will also increase the minimum wage for tipped workers, whose wages were not included in the minimum wage increase provided in the 2013-2014 budget. The increased minimum wage would also be indexed to the rate of inflation to ensure future increases would occur automatically to respond with inflation.

Senator Adriano Espaillat said, “Families struggling to pay the rent can’t wait until 2015 for a meaningful minimum wage hike to kick in, especially when the new rate isn’t even indexed to inflation. We also need to correct the injustice done to restaurant employees and other tipped workers, left out of last year’s budget agreement altogether, who are routinely victimized by unchecked wage theft. While President Obama and states across the country are pushing higher minimum wage increases to give low-income workers a lifeline, New Yorkers can’t simply postpone helping our state’s most vulnerable.”

Senate bill S.6490, sponsored by Senator Jose Peralta, would end the practice of providing corporate tax credits to employers who hire 16-19 year old students for minimum wage positions. This legislation would ensure that New York State does not provide extensive tax subsidies that may incentivize employers to terminate current minimum wage workers and constantly remove workers once they no longer ensure a state tax credit.

Senator Jose Peralta said, “The Minimum Wage Reimbursement Credit leads to discrimination against older, low-wage workers by providing firms a significant financial incentive to fire employees age 20 and older and replace them with teenagers. And it makes the minimum wage the maximum wage for teens by providing firms a financial incentive to cap teenage workers’ pay at the minimum wage. Why inflict this kind of pain on New York’s lowest-wage workers? To help some of the largest, most profitable companies on the planet pay for the modest increase in New York’s minimum hourly wage. Our tax money shouldn’t be spent on making rich companies richer and low-wage workers poorer.”

The legislation advanced by the Senate Democrats builds on the conference’s long-time support and advocacy for raising the minimum wage. Providing local governments with the authority to raise the minimum wage within their municipalities is a common sense way to address the concerns regarding different costs of living throughout New York State. Ensuring that minimum wage earners receive greater compensation for their hard work will help stimulate local economic growth throughout the state and lead to the creation of thousands of jobs.

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