Fight for $15 Impact Report:
Raises for 17 Million Workers, 10 Million Going to $15

Summary

The strikes taking place on April 14, 2016 mark three-and-one-half years since fast-food workers in New York launched the Fight for $15, focusing national attention on widening inequality and setting off a wave of action in various forms to raise wages. This report by the National Employment Law Project quantifies the impact that this movement has had to date on wages in the United States.

The key findings are the following:

- **Since November 2012, nearly 17 million workers throughout the country have earned wage increases** through a combination of states and cities raising their minimum wages; executive orders by city, state, and federal leaders; and individual companies raising their pay scales.

- Of those workers, **nearly 10 million—59 percent—will receive gradual raises to $15 per hour**, cementing $15 as the national benchmark for strong action on wages, and beginning to reverse decades of growing wage inequality.

- Most of those 10 million workers are receiving raises as a result of the **landmark $15 state minimum wages that California and New York approved last month**. Under those increases, **more than 1 in 3 workers in both states will receive raises of about $4,000 per year** once they are phased in.

- This wave of action is **historic in scale**. **Fifty-one states and cities** have raised the minimum wage since 2012—more than ever before in U.S. history.

- States and cities are delivering **larger raises for a broader segment of the workforce** than the United States has seen in 50 years. While the new $15 state wages in California and New York will raise pay for **more than one-third of workers**, the last federal minimum wage increase to $7.25 in 2009 raised pay for only **10 percent of the workforce**.
Findings

The U.S. economy has tilted so far towards low-paying jobs that today 42 percent of America’s workers earn less than $15 per hour.¹ In November 2012, when fast-food workers first went on strike launching the Fight for $15, they helped make the issue of income inequality and falling paychecks one of the nation’s top economic issues. Since then, unprecedented numbers of states, cities, and individual employers have taken action to raise wages.

- **Since 2012, states, cities, the Obama Administration, and scores of private employers have raised pay for 17 million workers.**

- **Nearly 10 million of these workers—59 percent—will receive gradual raises to $15 as a result of the Fight for $15.**
  
  - 8.8 million through state $15 wage increases—chiefly the historic increases approved by California and New York last month. See Table 1.
  
  - 863,000 through city $15 wage increases—such as those that Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other cities approved over the past three years. See Table 1.
  
  - And 88,000 through voluntary action by private employers such as Facebook, Aetna, and Nationwide Insurance that have raised pay scales to $15 or more for their employees or employees of their contractors. See Table 3.²

- **The other 7 million workers are receiving raises to levels below $15.**
  
  - 5 million through state and city wage increases to less than $15—15 states and 24 localities have approved raises to less than $15 since 2012.
  
  - 1.7 million through voluntary action by private employers—including 1.3 million alone at McDonalds and Walmart, which announced modest raises to $10.³ Other retailers and food industry giants, including The Gap, Ikea, Target, and Starbucks, followed with similar raises. And high-road leader Costco raised its starting pay to $13. See Table 3.
  
  - 200,000 through President Obama’s minimum wage executive order—which raised pay to $10.10 for employees of federal contractors. See Table 2.
• This wave of action is **historic in scale** and is beginning to **reverse decades of growing wage inequality**.

  o **A record 51 states and cities have raised their minimum wages since 2012—far more than ever before in U.S. history.** By contrast, in the years leading up to the last federal minimum wage increase in 2007, just 33 states and cities raised their wages.⁴

  o These are the **most significant minimum wage increases** that the nation has seen since Harry Truman nearly doubled the U.S. minimum wage in 1950.⁵ The landmark California and New York $15 minimum wages will **raise pay broadly for more than 1 in 3 workers in the two states by about $4,000 per year.**⁶ That's **more than three times the share** of workers that received raises under the last federal minimum wage increase. That increase to $7.25 in 2009 raised pay for just 10 percent of the workforce—a small segment of workers at the very bottom.⁷

  o **Nearly a dozen campaigns for $15 minimum wages are currently underway** across the country, including in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Minneapolis, and Montgomery County, Maryland, among others.⁸

  o **In Congress, support for a $15 minimum wage has been growing steadily,** with a broad array of Democrats, including Kirsten Gillibrand, Dick Durbin, Chris Van Hollen, Elizabeth Warren, Sherrod Brown, and 47 other members of the House and Senate, joining Bernie Sanders to co-sponsor a $15 federal minimum wage.⁹
Table 1: $15 Minimum Wage Increases Since Nov. 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Wage and Phase-In Schedule</th>
<th>Workers Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>$15.00 (2022-2023)</td>
<td>5,647,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>$15.00 (2019-2020 NYC; 2022 Long Island &amp; Westchester County); $12.50 (2021 Upstate, projected to phase up to $15 by 2023)</td>
<td>3,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts (Medicaid home care workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York (fast food)</td>
<td>$15.00 (Dec. 2018 NYC; July 2021 statewide)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York (state workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (Dec. 2018 NYC; July 2021 statewide)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York (state universities &amp; colleges)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018-2021)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,782,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles City, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2020)</td>
<td>609,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles County, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2020-2021)</td>
<td>(included in CA total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>143,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain View, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>(included in CA total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emeryville, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>(included in CA total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Monica, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2020-2021); $15.37 (2017 for hotels, motels &amp; businesses within them)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonoma County, CA (city contractors)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2016-2020)</td>
<td>(included in CA total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Cerrito, CA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2019)</td>
<td>(included in CA total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017-2021)</td>
<td>102,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>SeaTac, WA</td>
<td>$15.00 (2014)</td>
<td>6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY (city workers &amp; non-profit human services contractors)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse, NY (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2020)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2021)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Wage Level</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester, NY (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2021)</td>
<td>(included in NY total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2021)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland, OR (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro, NC (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2020)</td>
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<td>Missoula, MT (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jersey City, NJ (city workers)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2016)</td>
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<td>East Orange, NJ (city workers)</td>
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<td>Bloomfield, NJ (city workers)</td>
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<td>Milwaukee, OR (city workers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newark, NJ (city workers)</td>
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<td>no estimate</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Marcos, TX (employees of businesses receiving tax incentives)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2016)</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>863,094</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State and Local Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,645,094</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td>Wage and Phase-In Schedule</td>
<td>Workers Affected</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>$8.50 (2017)</td>
<td>44,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>$9.75 (2016)</td>
<td>48,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>$10.10 (2017)</td>
<td>227,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>$8.25 (2015)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>$10.10 (2018)</td>
<td>99,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$9.25 (2018)</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$9.50 (2016)</td>
<td>356,800</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>$9.00 (2016)</td>
<td>146,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>$8.25 (2015)</td>
<td>429,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>$12.50, $13.50, $14.75 (2012)</td>
<td>623,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>$9.00 (2015)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>$8.50 (2015)</td>
<td>64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>$10.50 (2018)</td>
<td>57,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>$8.75 (2016)</td>
<td>114,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,320,100</strong></td>
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<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>$13.00 (2019)</td>
<td>410,000</td>
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<td>Tacoma, WA</td>
<td>$12.00 (2018)</td>
<td>55,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernalillo County, NM</td>
<td>$8.50 (2014)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Cruces, NM</td>
<td>$10.10 (2019)</td>
<td>17,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Fe County, NM</td>
<td>$10.66 (2014)</td>
<td>28,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
<td>$10.68 (2017)</td>
<td>13,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangor, ME</td>
<td>$9.75 (2019)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson County, IA</td>
<td>$10.10 (2017)</td>
<td>14,600</td>
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<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>$11.50 (2016)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<td>Lexington, KY</td>
<td>$10.10 (2018)</td>
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<td>Montgomery County, MD</td>
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<td>Prince George's County, MD</td>
<td>$11.50 (2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>$9.00 (2017)</td>
<td>(not in force; court challenge)</td>
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<td>Richmond, CA</td>
<td>$13.00 (2018)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley, CA</td>
<td>$12.53 (2016)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
<td>$12.25 (2015)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
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<td>Sunnyvale, CA</td>
<td>$10.30 (2015)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
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<td>Palo Alto, CA</td>
<td>$11.00 (2016)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
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<td>City, State</td>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacramento, CA</td>
<td>$12.50 (2020)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>$13.00 (2019)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara, CA</td>
<td>$11.00 (2016)</td>
<td>(included in CA total, Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>$13.00 (2020)</td>
<td>(not in force; court challenge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>$11.00 (2018)</td>
<td>(not in force; court challenge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>$10.10 (2017)</td>
<td>(not in force; blocked by state legislature)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Subtotal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>713,700</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Obama Executive Order for Federal Contractors</td>
<td>$10.10 (2015)</td>
<td>200,000&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td><strong>Federal Subtotal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Under $15 Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5,233,800</strong></td>
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# Table 3: Employers Voluntarily Raising Pay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer &amp; State</th>
<th>Wage &amp; Phase-In Year</th>
<th>Type of Policy</th>
<th>Workers Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of California</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017)</td>
<td>Company Policy – Univ. Employees and Contractors</td>
<td>3,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1 Bank (FL)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JM Family Enterprises (FL)</td>
<td>$16.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hopkins Hospital (MD)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Community Center (MA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Associates (MA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Medical Center (MA)</td>
<td>$15.12 (2016)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tufts Medical Center (MA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (MA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridj (MA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
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<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moo Cluck Moo (MI)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2013)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alina Health Hospitals (MN)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2018)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement – Service workers</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota (MN)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement – Clerical workers</td>
<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Rochester Medical Center (NY)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement – Service workers</td>
<td>1,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hudson River Healthcare (NY)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello Alfred (NY)</td>
<td>$18.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruby Receptionists (OR)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duquesne University (PA)</td>
<td>$16.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Hospital (PA)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (PA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2021)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Living, Genesis Healthcare &amp; Oak Health (PA)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Wage</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington (WA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2017)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>5,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Truck Stop (ID)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington Home Care Workers (WA)</td>
<td>$15.40 (2017)</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>33,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook (CA)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy – Contractors</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maple (NY)</td>
<td>$14.00</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York University (NY)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2019)</td>
<td>Company Policy – Students</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University (NY)</td>
<td>$15.00 (2019)</td>
<td>Company Policy – Students</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Private Employers Paying $15+ Subtotal**  
87,537

**Other Pay Increase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Wage</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missouri home care workers</td>
<td>$10.15</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald’s</td>
<td>$10.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy – Corp. Owned Stores</td>
<td>90,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>$10.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>TJX Companies (TJ Maxx, Marshalls, HomeGoods, Sierra Trading Post)</td>
<td>$10.00 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gap Inc.</td>
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<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>65,000</td>
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<td>Target</td>
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<td>76,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Starbucks</td>
<td>Varies (2015)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costco</td>
<td>$13.00 or $13.50 (2016)</td>
<td>Company Policy</td>
<td>67,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>California State University</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Collective Bargaining Agreement</td>
<td>26,000</td>
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**Private Employers Offering Other Pay Increase Subtotal**  
1,669,500

**Private Employer Total**  
1,757,037
Endnotes


