

National Employment Law Project

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14 Cities & States Approved \$15 Minimum Wage in 2015

***More than one million low-wage workers are expected to benefit;
Over one dozen legislative or ballot proposals expected to move in 2016***

Washington, DC – It's been a banner year for the Fight for \$15. The movement, led by fast-food, retail and other low-wage workers, grew markedly in size and influence. Fourteen cities, counties and states approved a \$15 minimum wage through local laws, executive orders and other means in 2015. Dozens more ballot or legislative proposals were introduced around the country, 16 of which will carry over into 2016. And at least 23 notable employers voluntarily increased their minimum pay to \$15 or higher in 2015, either through company policy or collective bargaining agreements. On New Year's Day, workers in five jurisdictions will see the first of several increases toward a \$15 minimum wage.

Strong Momentum for \$15

In 2015, policymakers in 14 cities, counties and states approved \$15 minimum wage laws (see Table 1), heeding the calls of fast-food and other low-wage workers and strong union supporters like SEIU, who earlier in the year staged two of the largest mobilizations in decades. More than one million low-wage workers are expected to benefit when the \$15 wage raises are fully implemented.

- In **New York**, fast-food workers won a historic increase through the state's wage board, which raised pay to \$15 per hour by 2018 in New York City, and by 2021 in the rest of the state, making New York the first state to approve a statewide \$15 wage floor for fast-food workers, and bringing the Fight for \$15 from the city to the state level.
- In addition, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo used his executive powers to increase state employees' minimum pay to \$15 per hour, an increase that will follow the fast-food phase-in schedule. He was joined by Mayors Byron Brown of **Buffalo** and Lovely Warren of **Rochester**, who rolled out plans to raise pay for city workers to \$15 by 2021, while Mayor Stephanie Miner of **Syracuse** approved an immediate increase to \$15 for city workers.
- In the California cities of **Los Angeles**, **Mountain View** and **Emeryville**, and in the **County of Los Angeles**, legislators approved \$15 increases that will fully phase in between 2018 and 2021.
- **Massachusetts** made history when Gov. Charlie Baker's administration raised the hourly pay of home health care workers to \$15 by 2018 under a collective bargaining agreement with the Service Employee International Union Local 1199. This agreement made Massachusetts the first—and so far, the only—state to institute a statewide \$15 minimum wage for home health care workers.
- Jurisdictions along East and West Coasts were not alone in raising wages for low-wage workers, however. City and contract workers saw their pay increase to \$15 in places like **Missoula**, MT; **Pittsburgh**, PA; **Greensboro**, NC; **Portland**, OR; and **Milwaukie**, OR.
- Four jurisdictions—New York State, Buffalo, Mountain View and Missoula—plus Seattle, WA (which adopted a \$15 minimum wage in 2014) will take steps toward \$15 on or about **New Year's Day**; an additional four—Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, Emeryville and San Francisco (which approved its

\$15 minimum wage law in 2014)—will do so on **July 1, 2016**.

- Four other jurisdictions—Massachusetts, Pittsburgh, Greensboro and Rochester—will begin phasing in their \$15 minimum wage laws in **2017**, or on dates to be determined; and four others—Syracuse, Portland, Milwaukie and SeaTac (which adopted its minimum wage law in 2013)—have **already reached \$15**.

“We’ve seen incredible momentum this past year in the fight to raise wages to a level that will make a meaningful difference to America’s workers and their families,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “I expect there will be even more energy around the issue of stagnant wages and economic inequality in 2016—and an intense focus on what our elected officials, employers, working people, and voters can and should be doing about it.”

The Fight for \$15 is expected to make further inroads in the New Year. There are **16 pending legislative or ballot proposals in 15 jurisdictions** that will likely gain traction in 2016 (see Table 2). Among them are a legislative campaign led by **New York Gov. Cuomo** that seeks to make New York the first state with a statewide \$15 minimum wage; a minimum wage ballot initiative in **California** that puts the Golden State in the running to be the first \$15 state; and a ballot initiative in **Washington, D.C.** that proposes to increase the District’s minimum wage to \$15 by 2020 and eliminate the subminimum tipped wage by 2025. In **Congress**, 53 progressives, including Sens. Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, Sherrod Brown, Dick Durbin and others, are backing legislation for a \$15 federal minimum wage by 2020 and the gradual elimination of the subminimum tipped wage. While action on the minimum wage at any level is unlikely in the current Congress, the proposal has the support of at least 200 economists, and illustrates the influence of low-wage workers in the policymaking process. Several other proposals are currently in the works in cities and states, and are expected to be publicly launched in early 2016.

The Fight for \$15 has also influenced the pay scales of employers large and small. In 2015, at least **23 employers increased their minimum pay** to between \$14 and \$16 per hour, or began requiring their contractors to pay at least \$15 hourly (see Table 3). These high-road employers include insurance giants Aetna and Nationwide; Silicon Valley powerhouse Facebook; small and large banks, such as C1, First Green and Amalgamated; academic institutions, including the University of California and Duquesne University; and ice cream manufacturer Ben & Jerry’s. Four other employers—Lynn Community Health Center, John Hopkins Hospital, the University of Rochester and Moo Cluck Moo—lent early support to the movement when they began paying their employees a minimum of \$15 between 2013 and 2014. The Fight for \$15 also has had an impact on low-road employers, Walmart and McDonald’s, which in 2015 announced plans to implement modest pay increases in response to pressure from the Fight for \$15.

Other Minimum Wage Gains

Worker mobilization in the Fight for \$15 has also led to other more modest yet important wins in [cities](#) and [states](#) in the Midwest and South. These include the 2015 adoption of minimum wage ordinances in southern cities like Birmingham, AL, and Lexington, KY, and in midwestern Johnson County, IA. At the end of 2014, the Midwest’s largest city, Chicago, also adopted a robust minimum wage of \$13.00; and ballot initiatives in solid red states, Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota, were approved during the midterm November 2014 elections.

On or around January 1st, 14 states will see minimum wages increases due to previously enacted legislation, initiatives, or indexing (see Table 4). Another four states will see increases later in 2016 (see Table 5).

Economic [analysis](#) shows that low-wage workers just about anywhere in the country need at least \$15 per hour to meet basic needs, and that low-paying jobs can be manageably transitioned to \$15 wages. This is supported

not only by rigorous academic research and modeling, but also by reports from cities like Seattle and San Francisco that have adopted significantly higher minimum wages in recent years. The experiences of these cities show that higher wages have been manageable for businesses and have not led to layoffs or slowed job growth.

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The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit www.nelp.org or www.raisetheminimumwage.org.

Table 1: Existing \$15 Minimum Wage Laws, Phase-In Schedules and Estimated Impact

\$15 Laws with Steps in 2016, Including New Year's Eve 2015					
Jurisdiction	Wage in 2016	Effective Date of Step	Effective Date of Final Step	No. Workers Affected at Final Step	Year Approved
New York (fast food)	\$10.50 (NYC)	12/31/2015	12/31/2018	136,000	2015
	\$9.75 (NYS)		7/1/2021		
New York (state workers)	\$10.50 (NYC)	12/31/2015	12/31/2018	10,000	2015
	\$9.75 (NYS)		7/1/2021		
Buffalo, NY (city workers)	\$9.75	12/31/2015	7/1/2021	479	2015
Mountain View, CA	\$11.00	1/1/2016	1/1/2018	Unknown	2015
Missoula, MT (city workers)	\$12.00	1/1/2016	7/1/2017	16	2015
Los Angeles County, CA	\$10.50	7/1/2016	7/1/2020	155,000	2015
Los Angeles City, CA	\$10.50 (26+ wrkrs)	7/1/2016	7/1/2020	500,000	2015
	State wage (<26)	---	7/1/2021		
Emeryville, CA	\$14.82 (56+ wrkrs)	7/1/2016	7/2/2015	Unknown	2015
	\$13.00 (<56)		7/1/2018		
San Francisco, CA	\$13.00	7/1/2016	7/1/2018	142,000	2014
Seattle, WA	\$13.00 (501+ wrkrs; no med benefits)	1/1/2016	1/1/2017	102,000	2014
	\$12.50 (501+ wrkrs; with med benefits)		1/1/2018		
	\$12.00 (<501; no tips or med ben.)		1/1/2021		
	\$10.50 (<501; with tips or med benefit)		1/1/2019		
Worker Impact at Final Step of at Least:				1,045,495	
\$15 Laws with Steps Beginning 2017 or TBD					
Jurisdiction	Wage at Next Step	Effective Date of Step	Effective Date of Final Step	No. Workers Affected at Final Step	Year When Approved
Massachusetts (home health care workers)	TBD	TBD	7/2018	35,000	2015
Pittsburgh, PA (city workers)	\$12.50	1/1/2017	1/1/2021	300	2015
Greensboro, NC (city workers)	\$10.00 (roster & seasonal positions)	TBD	2020	245	2015
	\$12.00 (positions with benefits)				
Rochester, NY (city workers)	TBD	TBD	2021	116	2015
Worker Impact at Final Step of at Least:				35,661	

Fully Phased-In \$15 Laws					
Jurisdiction	Next Increase	Effective Date of Increase	Date of Final Step	No. Workers Affected at Final Step	Year When Approved
Syracuse, NY (city workers)	---	---	10/21/2015	61	2015
Portland, OR (contract workers)	TBD	7/1/2016	FY 2015	175	2015
Milwaukie, OR (city & contract workers)	---	---	2015	Unknown	2015
SeaTac, WA (travel & hospitality)	\$15.24 (same as 2015)	1/1/2016	1/1/2014	6,300	2013
Worker Impact at Final Step of at Least:				6,536	

Table 2: Current Ballot and Legislative Proposals for \$15 or More

Jurisdiction	Wage & Phase-In Year	Legislative or Ballot	Year Proposed
Federal	\$15.00 (2020)	L	2015
New York	\$15.00 (2018 NYC, 2021 NYS)	L	2015
California	\$15.00 (2021)	B	2015
	\$15.00 (2020 business 25+ wrkrs; 2021 business <25)	B	2015
Washington, DC	\$15.00 (2020)	B	2015
Massachusetts (fast food & big retail)	\$15.00 (2018)	L	2015
Oregon	\$15.00 (2019) *	B	2015
Missouri	\$15.00 (2023) **	B	2015
Olympia, WA	\$15.00	B	2015
Sacramento, CA	\$15.00 (2020)	B	2015
Pasadena, CA	\$15.00	L	2015
Palo Alto, CA	\$15.00 (2018)	L	2015
Sunnyvale, CA	\$15.00 (2018)	L	2015
Berkeley, CA	\$15.00 (2018 business 55+ wrkrs; 2020 business <55)	L	2015
Long Beach, CA	\$16.00	L	2015
Davis, CA	\$15.00	B	2014
Minneapolis, MN	\$15.00	L	2015

* Another initiative for \$13.50 was also filed in Oregon for the November 2016 election.

** Two other initiatives were also filed in Missouri: \$12 by 2020, and \$11 by 2019.

Table 3: Employers Raising Pay to \$14 or More

Employer & State	Wage & Phase-In Year	Year Approved	Type of Policy
Aetna	\$16.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Amalgamated Bank	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Endurance International Group	\$14.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Nationwide Insurance	\$15.00 (2016)	2015	Company policy
Facebook (CA)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy - Contractors
Google (CA)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy – Employees & contractors
University of California (CA)	\$15.00 (2017)	2015	Company policy – Employees & contractors
C1 Bank (FL)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
First Green Bank (FL)	\$14.90 (2015)	2015	Company policy
JM Family Enterprises (FL)	16.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Curriculum Associates (MA)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Bridj (MA)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy

Boston Medical Center (MA)	\$15.12 (2016)	2015	Collective bargaining agreement
Tufts Medical Center	\$15.00 (2017)	2015	Company policy
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (MA)	\$15.00 (2016)	2015	Company policy
Allina Health Hospitals (MN)	\$15.00 (2018)	2015	Collective bargaining agreement – service workers
University of Minnesota	\$15.00 (TBD)	2015	Collective bargaining agreement – clerical workers
Hudson River HealthCare (NY)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Ruby Receptionists (OR)	\$15.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Duquesne University (PA)	\$16.00 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Ben & Jerry's (VT)	\$16.92 (2015)	2015	Company policy
Seattle Central Co-Op Grocery Store (WA)	\$15.36 (2015)	2015	Collective bargaining agreement
University of Washington (WA)	\$15.00 (2017)	2015	Company policy
Lynn Community Health Center (MA)	\$15.00 (2016)	2014	Collective bargaining agreement
John Hopkins Hospital (MD)	\$15.00 (2017)	2014	Collective bargaining agreement
University of Rochester (NY)	\$15.00 (2017)	2014	Collective bargaining agreement – service workers
Moo Cluck Moo (MI)	\$15.00 (2013)	2013	Company policy

Table 4: States That May See Minimum Wage Increases on or Around New Year's Day 2016

State	Current Minimum Wage	Minimum Wage on/around Jan. 1, 2016	Future Increases
Alaska	\$8.75	\$9.75	CPI
Arizona	\$8.05	\$8.05 (no change)	CPI
Arkansas	\$7.50	\$8.00	\$8.50 (2017)
California	\$9.00	\$10.00	
Colorado	\$8.23	\$8.31	CPI
Connecticut	\$9.15	\$9.60	\$10.10 (2017)
Florida	\$8.05	\$8.05 (no change)	CPI
Hawaii	\$7.75	\$8.50	\$9.25 (2017); \$10.10 (2018)
Massachusetts	\$9.00	\$10.00	\$11.00 (2017)
Michigan	\$8.15	\$8.50	\$8.90 (2017); \$9.25 (2018); CPI up to 3.5%
Missouri	\$7.65	\$7.65 (no change)	CPI
Montana	\$8.05	\$8.05 (no change)	CPI
Nebraska	\$8.00	\$9.00	
New Jersey	\$8.38	\$8.38 (no change)	CPI
New York	\$8.75	\$9.00 (12/31/2015)	
New York (Fast Food)	\$8.75	\$10.50 (NYC) & \$9.75 (NYS) (12/31/2015)	NYC: \$12.00 (2016), \$13.50 (2017), \$15.00 (2018) NYS: \$10.75 (2016), \$11.75 (2017), \$12.75 (2018), \$13.75 (2019), \$14.50 (2020), \$15.00 (2021)
Ohio	\$8.10	\$8.10 (no change)	CPI
Oregon	\$9.25	\$9.25 (no change)	CPI
Rhode Island	\$9.00	\$9.60	
South Dakota	\$8.50	\$8.55	CPI
Vermont	\$9.15	\$9.60	\$10.00 (2017); \$10.50 (2018); 5% or CPI
Washington	\$9.47	\$9.47 (no change)	CPI
West Virginia	\$8.00	\$8.75 (12/31/2015)	

Table 5: States with Minimum Wage Increases Later in 2016

State	Current Minimum Wage	Minimum Wage and Effective Date in 2016	Future Increases
District of Columbia	\$10.53	\$11.50 (7/1/2016)	CPI
Maryland	\$8.25	\$8.75 (7/1/2016)	\$9.25 (2017); \$10.10 (2018)
Minnesota	\$9.00/\$7.25 ¹	\$9.50/\$7.75 (8/1/2016)	CPI (2018)
Nevada	\$8.25/\$7.25 ²	TBD (7/1/2016)	CPI

¹ Based on size of business and sales volume.

² Based on whether employer provides health benefits.