

Governor Quinn Meets with President Obama About Raising the Minimum Wage

Written by Katie Hickey

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Measure Would Help Alleviate Poverty and Drive Economic Growth

WASHINGTON – Governor Pat Quinn today met with President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and senior administration officials at the White House to discuss raising the federal and Illinois minimum wage rates. Governor Quinn’s ongoing fight to raise Illinois’ minimum wage is in line with President Obama’s push to raise the federal minimum wage. The Governor first proposed raising the minimum wage in his 2013 State of the State address and today’s meeting with the President is part of his agenda to alleviate poverty, drive economic growth and ensure that all Illinois workers are treated fairly.

“Hundreds of thousands of people across Illinois are working full time but are still trapped in poverty,” Governor Quinn said. “Numerous studies have shown this common-sense proposal is good for workers and the economy. Raising the minimum wage is the right and decent thing to do and I thank President Obama for his leadership and commitment to getting this job done.”

“Governor Quinn is doing extraordinary work in Illinois to lift their minimum wage and give more hard-working Americans a raise,” President Obama said.

Today’s meeting builds on growing momentum to raise the minimum wage across the country. Just this week, The Gap Inc. acted to raise its own minimum wage to \$10 for all U.S. employees. The move is expected to impact 65,000 American workers and more than 4,000 employees in Illinois.

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The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. President Obama is pushing to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10. The Governor is working to raise Illinois' minimum wage from its current \$8.25 per hour to at least \$10 per hour.

A full-time minimum wage worker in Illinois makes around \$16,600 annually, which is well below the Federal Poverty Threshold of \$19,790 for a family of three. Six in 10 minimum wage employees are female, including many single parents. The Governor supports raising the minimum wage over the next two years.

The \$8.25 per hour Illinois minimum wage, which hasn't been increased since 2010, is less than half of the average U.S. hourly wage. By increasing the Illinois minimum wage to \$10, a half-million Illinois consumers will make an extra \$4,800 a year and much of that extra income will typically be spent at local businesses on food, clothing and furniture, providing a strong boost to the local economy.

Studies conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago show that an increase of \$1 in the minimum wage generates approximately \$2,800 in consumer spending per year, greatly improving purchasing power and strengthening the economy. A recent survey found that nearly two-thirds of small business owners support raising the federal minimum wage because they believe it will help the economy and, in turn, enable them to hire more workers, according to a poll conducted by the Small Business Majority. Leaders from large companies such as Costco, Starbucks and Stride Rite also have supported increasing the minimum wage as a way to reduce employee turnover and improve workers' productivity.

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