Ohioans for Raising the Wage

For Immediate Release: January 17, 2020
Contact: James Hayes  james@oh4rw.org

First Hurdle Cleared to Raise the Minimum Wage in Ohio to $13 by 2025

Columbus, Ohio – Ohioans for Raising the Wage, a coalition of community, faith, and labor leaders, took the first steps to ensure Ohioans can make ends meet by raising the minimum wage in Ohio to $13 by 2025. They filed a Constitutional amendment with Ohio Attorney General David Yost, submitting policy language and more than the required 1,000 signatures from Ohio voters.

Ohio’s minimum wage is currently only $8.70, leaving even a full-time worker with too little to cover the cost of rent, groceries, and other basics. Right now, an Ohioan working full-time for minimum wage is paid just $18,096 per year, or $348 per week. According to Policy Matters Ohio, today’s minimum wage leaves a full-time worker with a family of three $3,000 below the poverty line of $21,330.

Anthony Caldwell, Director of Public Affairs at SEIU District 1199, a union with nearly 30,000 health care, social service, and public sector members, said “People working 40 hours a week at minimum wage can barely afford groceries. We’ve got to do something. Minimum wage is not enough to cover even the most basic needs.”

Scott DiMauro, President of the Ohio Education Association, which represents 122,000 teachers, faculty members and support professionals in Ohio’s public schools, colleges and universities, added “With minimum wage so low, too many parents can’t make ends meet, and too many students are forced to make do with the very basics. When our students have economic stability at home, they can flourish at school and fulfill their full promise to become leaders, innovators, and caring members of our community.”

The coalition commissioned a poll on the ballot language last year, conducted by Global Strategy Group, showing that 65% of likely voters in Ohio back this increase, with only 29% opposing.

Pierrette Talley, one of the petitioners, representing the Ohio Unity Coalition (the Ohio affiliate of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation), said, “This measure is popular across our communities in Ohio, so if it makes the ballot, Ohioans will make it law. Voters understand in their guts and know in their hearts, that Ohio’s minimum wage has been held down too low for too long. You can’t expect people to live on just $18,000 a year and keep their heads above water.”

“Putting more money in the pockets of hard-working Ohioans, means they spend that money locally,” added Reverend Michael Harrison, Youngstown-based president of the Ohio Baptist State Convention and Board Chair of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, a coalition of 20 community organizations, faith-based institutions, labor unions, and policy groups. “This gives a long overdue economic boost to working people and the Ohio communities where we live.”

The initiative, which would amend the state’s constitution, will require that the coalition submits 442,958 valid signatures by July 1, 2020. First, the Attorney General must certify the initiative language is accurate, after which the Ballot Board must deem that our petition is single subject.

Ohioans for Raising the Wage is currently organizing volunteers and raising money to make sure Ohio voters have our voices heard on a minimum wage increase this November.

To find out more or volunteer with Ohioans for Raising the Wage, go to www.ohioansforraisingthewage.org.