

Pay to rise for millions as 19 states increase minimum wage



AP Photo/Mike Groll

Supporters of a \$15 minimum wage for fast food workers rally in front of a McDonald's in Albany, N.Y. Millions of workers across the U.S. will see their pay increase as 19 states bump up their minimum wages as the new year begins. California, New York and Arizona are among the states with increases taking effect Saturday or Sunday.

Oregon's wage will increase in varying amounts

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — It will be a happy New Year indeed for millions of the lowest-paid U.S. workers. Nineteen states, including New York and California, will ring in the year with an increase in the minimum wage.

Massachusetts and Washington state will have the highest new minimum wages in the country, at \$11 per hour.

California will raise its wage to \$10. New York state is taking a regional approach, with the wage rising to \$11 in New York City, \$10 in its downstate suburbs and \$9.70 elsewhere.

"This \$1.50 increase, I cannot even comprehend or tell you how important this will be," said Alvin Major, a New York City fast-food worker.

The 51-year-old father of four helped lead the fight for the increase in his state, one of several successful efforts by fast-food workers and other low wage workers around the country. "The price of food has gone up. Rent has gone up. Everything has gone up. ... This will make a difference for so many people."

Voters in Arizona, Maine, Colorado and Washington approved increases in this year's election. Seven other states, Alaska, Florida, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, Ohio and South Dakota, are automatically raising the wage based on indexing.

The other states seeing increases are Arkansas, Con-

necticut, Hawaii, Michigan and Vermont.

Workers and labor advocates argue the increases will help low-wage workers now barely making ends meet and boost the economy by giving some consumers more money to spend. But many business owners opposed the higher wages, saying they would lead to higher prices and greater automation.

Some restaurant owners may consider reducing portion sizes or charging for side dishes that were once included in the price of a meal to absorb the increase, according to Melissa Fleischut, president of the New York State Restaurant Association.

"I'm sure prices will go up where they can, but restaurants want to avoid sticker shock," she said. "They're going to have to get creative."

The adjustments in Oregon

(July 1), New York, California and several other states are part of a series of gradual increases to a \$12 or \$15 hourly wage.

The minimum wage will also go up this weekend in 22 cities and counties, including San Diego, San Jose and Seattle.

The high number of states and localities raising the wage this year reflects the successful work of fast-food workers and organized labor, according to Tsedeye Gebreselassie, senior staff attorney at the National Employment Law Project, as well as federal inaction on the wage. The national minimum was last raised, to \$7.25, in 2009.

"These aren't only teens trying to make some pocket money," she said. "Increasingly it's adults who are using this money to support their families."

States face off over future of Obama global warming plan

Oregon among the signers

By MARY ESCH and JASON DEAREN
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — Two weeks after officials in two dozen states asked Republican President-elect Donald Trump to kill one of President Barack Obama's signature plans to curb global warming, another group of state officials is urging Trump to save it.

Democratic attorneys general in 15 states plus four cities and counties sent a letter to Trump asking him to preserve Obama's Clean Power Plan, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, the lead author, announced Thursday.

The letter was a rebuttal to one sent this month by Republican officials from West Virginia and 21 other states and Democrats from the coal-producing states of Kentucky and Missouri urging Trump to issue a Day 1 executive order declaring the Clean Power Plan unlawful and prohibiting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from enforcing it.

The Clean Power Plan aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions at existing power plants, the nation's largest source of the pollution, by about one-third by 2030. Opponents say the Environmental Protection Agency lacks authority to implement the rules. The plan is already the subject of a legal fight.

Climate agenda

Trump has called the science showing climate change a hoax. His choice to head



AP Photo/Seth Wenig

Two weeks after officials in two dozen states asked Donald Trump to kill one of President Barack Obama's plans to curb global warming, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman (pictured) was lead author on a rebuttal letter signed by Democratic attorneys general in 15 states, plus four cities and counties, asking the president-elect to save it.

the EPA, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, has sued the EPA repeatedly to stop its climate agenda including Obama's sweeping power plant rules. And his nominee to run the Department of Energy, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, has questioned climate science while working to promote coal-fired power in Texas. But in a television interview this month Trump said he was "still open-minded" about the science of climate change.

Schneiderman said states like New York are "on the front lines of climate change" and have demonstrated how to cut pollution and emissions while protecting affordable and reliable electricity, creating jobs and growing the economy.

"The Clean Power Plan

builds on that successful work and is a blueprint for the critical action needed to fight climate change's devastating environmental, economic and public health impacts," he said.

Under Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Clean Energy Standard, established this year, 50 percent of New York state's electricity must come from renewable energy sources like wind and solar by 2030. New York and eight

other states are part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a cap-and-trade program that has reduced carbon dioxide emissions from electrical generation in the region by 40 percent from 2005 levels.

In California

In California, the nation's most populous state, which also signed the letter, the goal is also to have half of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and a 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gases.

The letter to Trump lists local impacts of climate change from fossil fuel emissions, including drought in California, catastrophic storm surge in New York City, a record deluge on Colorado's Front Range, high-tide flooding in Virginia and South Florida and diminished shellfish harvest in Oregon and Washington state.

The legal challenge, filed by 27 states that oppose the Clean Power Plan, is before a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C. A decision on the plan could come at any time, but the U.S. Supreme Court has temporarily blocked implementation of the rule until the court challenge is resolved.

Still, even if Trump wants to scrap the plan, it would be a large, time-consuming task.

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State trooper out of ICU, recovering

Associated Press

PORTLAND — The family of a wounded Oregon State Police trooper says he has been moved out of the intensive care unit and into a hospital room just days after being shot several times on Christmas night.

The brother of Trooper Nic Cederberg writes on an online fundraising page that the officer will undergo surgery Friday to fix a broken arm.



Nic Cederberg

The brother, Jeff Cederberg, says the procedure is his brother's last major surgery for the time being and he is "amazing the doctors and nurses with how his recovery is going."

Authorities say the trooper was shot Sunday night by homicide suspect James Tylka following a car chase. Tylka was then killed by police.

Officers pursued Tylka after finding his estranged wife dead outside his suburban Portland home.

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