

ECONOMISTS' STATEMENT

June 8, 2001

Dear Senator:

We 80+ economists from throughout New York support an increase in the state minimum wage to \$6.75 an hour. The Assembly has already passed a bill to this effect, and we urge you to join in this bipartisan effort to make work pay in New York State.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$6.75 in 2002 and tying further increases to the regional Consumer Price Index will significantly raise income for over 1 million New York workers. Most of the beneficiaries are adults, most are female, and the vast majority are members of low-income working families. This increase is certainly affordable in light of the fact that in 1968 the minimum wage was equivalent to well over \$7.00 an hour expressed in current dollars, compared to \$5.15 an hour now.

By increasing its minimum wage, New York would join a growing list of states where voters and political leaders have chosen to take control over wage policy rather than wait for Congress to act at the federal level. There are now ten states plus the District of Columbia with minimum wage levels above the current \$5.15 federal level, including four neighbors: Vermont (\$6.25), Massachusetts (\$6.75), Connecticut (\$6.70 as of 2002), and Rhode Island (\$6.15). These states hold in common a high level of average income and a high cost of living, two factors that favor a state minimum higher than the inadequate national floor.

In its *1999 Economic Report of the President*, the Council of Economic Advisors remarked that "the weight of the evidence suggests that modest increases in the minimum wage have had very little or no effect on employment." While controversy about the precise employment effects of the minimum wage continues, there is no reason to doubt that a modest increase in the minimum wage will achieve the intended goal of improving the well being of low-wage workers.

Sincerely,

Robert Cherry
Brooklyn College/CUNY

Mark Levitan
Community Service Society of NY

Thomas Michl
Colgate University

Trudi Renwick
Fiscal Policy Institute

Moshe Adler
Fiscal Policy Institute

Nesecan Balkan
Hamilton College

Sandra Baum
Skidmore College

David Andrews
Hamilton College

Christopher B. Barrett
Cornell University

Lourdes Beneria
Cornell University

Erol Balkan
Hamilton College

Janis Barry
Fordham University

Peter Birckmayer
Empire State College/SUNY

Eugene Canjels New School University	Conrad Herold Hofstra University	Eshragh Motahar Union College
J. Dennis Chasse SUNY Brockport	Joan Hoffman John Jay College/CUNY	Egon Neuberger SUNY Stony Brook
Kimberley Christensen SUNY Purchase	David Howell New School University	Carol O’Cleireacain The Brookings Institution
Clifford Clark Binghamton University /SUNY	Ruth Indeck Economy Connection	Mehmet Odekon Skidmore College
Jayne Dean Wagner College	Elizabeth J. Jensen Hamilton College	Shaienne Osterreich Warner Ithaca College
Gregory DeFreitas Hofstra University	Robert Jones Skidmore College	James Parrott Fiscal Policy Institute
Ranjit Dighe SUNY Oswego	Bernard Jump Syracuse University	Steve Pendleton SUNY Buffalo State
Romesh Diwan RPI	Lawrence Jay Kaplan John Jay College/CUNY	Kenneth Peres Communication Workers of America
Matthew Drennan Cornell University	Tim Koechlin Skidmore College	Marilyn Power Sarah Lawrence College
Massoud Fazeli Hofstra University	Doug Koritz SUNY Buffalo State	Charlotte A. Price Sarah Lawrence College
Fred Floss SUNY Buffalo State	Nicholas Kozlov Hofstra University	Paddy Quick St. Francis College
Raymond S. Franklin Queens College/CUNY	Joel Kupferman NY Environmental Law & Justice Project	Bruce Reynolds Union College
Irwin Garfinkel Columbia University	Fatemeh Moghadam Hofstra University	Leonard Rodberg Queens College/CUNY
Barbara Garson Author	Jay Mandle Colgate University	Jean Paul Rodrigue Hofstra University
Christophe Georges Hamilton College	Frank Mauro Fiscal Policy Institute	Frank Roosevelt Sarah Lawrence College
William Goldsmith Cornell University	Alan McAdams Cornell University	Sumner Rosen Columbia University
Ulla Grapard Colgate University	Edwin Melendez New School University	Grant Saff Hofstra University
Christopher Gunn Hobart and William Smith Colleges	Martin Melkonian Hofstra University	Sid Saltzman Cornell University
	William Milberg New School University	Elliot Sclar Columbia University

Richard Shirey
Siena College

Donald Solar
C. W. Post/LIU

Jeannine Swift
Hofstra University

William Swift
Hofstra University

William Tabb
Queens College/CUNY

Jill Tiefenthaler
Colgate University

Scott Trees
Siena College

A. Dale Tussing
Syracuse University

James Wiley
Hofstra University

Edward Wolff
New York University

June Zaccone
Hofstra University

Naomi Zauderer
National Employment Law Project

Organizational affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.

For more information contact:

Thomas Michl - (518) 475-1418

Mark Levitan - (212) 614-5422