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# Gillibrand, Jeffries Visit Brooklyn to Push For Higher Minimum Wage

Local electeds gather in Bed-Stuy to announce their support of a bill in Congress to raise worker pay.

By [C. Zawadi Morris](#) [Email the author](#) August 21, 2012

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U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries joined local small business owner Daicha Perkins at her establishment [Tiny Cup](#) on Nostrand Avenue in Bed-Stuy today to announce their support of a federal minimum wage increase.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2012, co-sponsored by Senator Gillibrand, calls for an increase in the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9.80 an hour in three 85-cent increments over the next three years.

"A lot of people misunderstand the minimum wage; they somehow think it has to do with kids or teenagers or summer part-time jobs," said Gillibrand. "But more than 80 percent of our lowest wage earners are adults; more than 40 percent of them are minorities; and more than half of them are women."

Many states, including New York, have minimum wage requirements as well. New York's is also currently \$7.25. Employers are required to follow whichever mandate is higher.

The current minimum wage, which is at a historic low, would be estimated at \$10.50 an hour if indexed with the current rate of inflation. But at its current level, a minimum wage worker earns \$15,000 annually—\$3,000 below the poverty line, Gillibrand pointed out.

"Imagine how difficult it is to try to provide for your kids on \$15,000 a year," she said. "We have to do better for our families, we have to do better for our kids."

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2012 would boost the incomes of an estimated 651,000 New York City workers, including approximately 195,000 Brooklyn residents, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute, and generate an estimated \$618 million of new consumer spending at New York City businesses according to the Economic Policy Institute.

"As someone who has worked for minimum wage, I feel it is definitely necessary and long overdue," said Perkins. "On top of that, with a wage increase, I won't have to worry about [my employees] working two, three jobs to pay their rent. Now they can stay here and be able to live on just that. It makes things more consistent."

"New York City is one of the most expensive cities in the world. The cost of housing, gasoline, Metrocards, medicine... the cost of a gallon of milk has increased," said Jeffries. "Yet the federal minimum wage has remained the same. And as a result, there are working families all across the City of New York trapped in an economic stranglehold."

"The situation is completely unacceptable. That's why I'm proud to stand with Senator Gillibrand to call upon the Congress to enact this legislation. We will not rest until there is an increase in the federal minimum wage."

If passed, the Fair Minimum Wage Act will increase wages to \$20,000 annually. The bill also raises the minimum wage for tipped workers—70 percent of the regular minimum wage—the first increase for these workers in more than 20 years.

Senator Gillibrand said she hopes to help push through the bi-partisan legislation before the end of the year.

**[VIDEO]**

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**Joe Gonzalez**

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**11:08 am on Tuesday, August 21, 2012**

Does anyone know if Hakeem Jeffries discussed with Senator Gillibrand the matter of the NYCHA scandal? I even wonder why no one called out the senator on the fact she has never walked thru the projects and or even raised the issue of the horrible condition things are in. The minimum wage issue while certainly important, the issue of unemployment is likewise relevant. The one billion dollars of unspent federal funds sitting in NYCHA bank accounts could create many jobs for NYCHA residents and start to repair the 500 empty apartments in Fort Green Projects.

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