

Minimum Wage Continues To Rise

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Effective at the beginning of 2105, the laws of 29 states and the District of Columbia require minimum wages in private employment that are higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Despite already requiring higher wages than the federal minimum wage, the majority of those states experienced an increase in the state-mandated minimum wage effective in 2015, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. In four states, voters approved minimum wage increases through ballot measures in the 2014 general election (Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota). In eleven states, the state minimum wage was raised by legislation in 2014 (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia and the District of Columbia). In nine states, the state minimum wage automatically increased on January 1, 2015 because the minimum wage is indexed to cost of living statistics (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon and Washington). According to data published by the U.S. Department of Labor, the minimum wages in all but a minority of states are not determined by federal law as of the beginning of this year, but by state law. See <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>. The wage increases listed above that occurred in 2014 were a major driver in creating this result. Recent announcements by large private retail employers of “voluntary” minimum company pay rates will provide another potential driver for increases in the actual, effective minimum wage. Whether or not Congress considers the Obama administration’s call to increase the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour in his recent State of the Union address, the effective minimum wage for the majority of the USA’s workforce continues to rise.

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