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NEWS

Los Angeles moves closer to raising minimum wage to \$15

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Photo: Damian Dovarganes, AP

Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson speaks to Council members to vote to raise the minimum wage in the city to \$15 an hour by 2020 in Los Angeles Wednesday, June 3, 2015. The Los Angeles City Council has voted 13-1 to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2020, but a second vote is required. The ordinance tentatively approved Wednesday had the endorsement of Mayor Eric Garcetti. A final vote will be taken June 10 because the action Wednesday was not unanimous. The increases would begin with a wage of \$10.50 in July 2016, followed by annual increases to \$12, \$13.25, \$14.25 and then \$15. Small businesses and nonprofits would be a year behind.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Officials voted to make Los Angeles the biggest city in the nation to gradually raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, but a second vote is required for final approval because the tally was not unanimous.

Nonetheless, City Council President Herb Wesson stressed to the cheering crowd that the outcome was all but certain. He told his colleagues before the 13-1 vote Wednesday that it may be the most important one of their political careers.

"The winds in this country do blow from the west to the east, and cities throughout the United States will watch what we do, and they will do the same," he said. "So the action that we're taking today will affect millions."

Mayor Eric Garcetti endorses the ordinance, which faces a final vote set for June 10.

Before the vote, representatives of the business community warned of harmful effects from an increase, while workers urged its passage.

The increases would begin with a wage of \$10.50 in July 2016, followed by annual increases to \$12, \$13.25, \$14.25 and \$15. Small businesses and nonprofits would be a year behind.

Calls for raising the minimum wage have grown as the nation struggles with fallout from the recession, worsening income inequality, persistent poverty and the challenges of immigration and the global economy.

Los Angeles would join Seattle and San Francisco as large cities with phased-in minimum wage laws that eventually require annual pay of about \$31,200 for a full-time job.

Last year, Chicago passed a phased-in minimum wage increase to \$13 an hour.

Earlier this week, the California Senate approved a plan to raise the statewide minimum wage again, lifting it to \$13 an hour in 2017 and tying it to the rate of inflation after that.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has said he also wants to boost his city's lowest hourly pay to \$15.

In Los Angeles, some business leaders had expressed concern about potential amendments to the wage increase proposal that have been suggested over the past several weeks. The changes include an exemption for companies with unionized workforces and a mandate that companies give workers as many as 12 paid days off a year.

The mayor has declined to say whether he supported either amendment.