

Putting Pressure on the Wage Deal

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The budget is by no means finished yet but a minimum wage deal that will incrementally increase the wage to \$9 an hour by 2016 has been pretty steadily floated by leadership over the past few days. If the idea was floated as a trial balloon than the jury seems to be in with its verdict.

Senate Minority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins issued a statement today asking Gov. Andrew Cuomo to remove the minimum wage from the budget:

As details emerge it is clear that the current minimum wage proposal has some serious issues. While increasing the minimum wage to \$9.00 is something that the Senate Democrats have long supported, we are disappointed that the current proposal doesn't reach this level for three years, is not indexed to the rate of inflation and does not raise the wages of certain service workers. The Governor and the Assembly all originally proposed acceptable proposals, unfortunately the Senate Republicans have blocked these efforts. We propose removing this discussion from the budget and we stand ready to provide 27 votes for raising the minimum wage quicker, with indexing and for all low wage workers."

Sen. Gustavo Rivera told me he supports the move and wants to vote on the bill separately on the floor of the Senate. He says all 27 Senate Democrats would vote for a minimum wage increase of \$9 will indexing.

A number of wage [advocates have slammed the proposal](#) and are accusing the Independent Senate Democrats of ceding negotiating power to the Senate Republicans who have been traditionally opposed to minimum wage hikes. Advocates rallied today at two IDC offices to protest the fact that tip workers would not benefit from the wage hike.

Now former Green Party Gubernatorial candidate Howie Hawkins is weighing in with this statement:

Last year Cuomo killed a minimum wage hike even though public opinion polls demonstrated overwhelming support among voters for it, including Republicans. Then he allowed the Republicans to gerrymander the Senate district lines in order to try to hang on to a majority even though there are two million more enrolled Democrats in the state. When that failed, Senators Klein and Valesky and the other conservative Democrats in the Independent Democratic Conference (all also nominated by the corporate Democratic branding operation called the Working Families Party) decided to break off and keep the Republicans in power despite their minority status. Cuomo, as leader of the Democratic Party, did nothing to prevent that maneuver by conservatives.

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