

Proponents hail possible deal on NY minimum wage

March 20, 2013 by JAMES T. MADORE / james.madore@newsday.com



Advocates of raising the minimum wage Tuesday hailed a tentative deal among the state's top leaders to boost the wage to \$9, while opponents were relieved the increase will be phased in.

[Long Island](#) has been a battleground in the fight over whether to hike the \$7.25-per-hour minimum, in part because the region is home to

many small businesses and [Republican](#) leaders of the State [Senate](#), both of which have opposed efforts to boost the wage rate.

The tentative deal, to be included in the state's 2013-14 budget, calls for the minimum to climb to \$9 an hour by the end of 2015, according to aides to Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#), the Assembly's Democratic majority and the [Senate](#)'s governing coalition.

They said the agreement includes tax breaks proposed by [Senate Republicans](#) to offset employers' larger payroll costs, including a tax credit for every teen worker.

The aides, who requested anonymity, said future raises would be subject to lawmakers' approval, not be automatically tied to the inflation rate, as had been championed by Assembly Speaker [Sheldon Silver](#) (D-Manhattan).

John J. Corrado, president of [Suffolk Transportation Service Inc.](#), said Tuesday the apparent agreement in [Albany](#) would [benefit](#) the occupants of corner offices and the rank and file.

"This will allow workers that have lost jobs to re-enter the workforce. . . . It will increase spending, and that will be beneficial to the economy," he said.

Corrado, whose [Bay Shore](#) company employs 1,500 workers operating school buses and [Suffolk County](#) public buses, joined other executives, union leaders and advocates for immigrants at a [Woodbury](#) event to celebrate the likelihood that the wage rate will be going up.

Separately, the [Long Island](#) Association, the region's largest business group, predicted that raising the minimum wage would result in higher salaries for non-entry jobs, and therefore boost



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costs across the board. However, LIA president Kevin Law added, "We are pleased to see the proposed increases would be phased in over a three-year period and not be indexed to inflation."

The wage hike will likely affect a small group, primarily at farms, restaurants, delis, home improvement contractors and car washes.

Roughly 32,000 local residents -- 2.3 percent of those employed -- were paid the \$7.25 minimum or less in 2011, based on ratios calculated by Newsday using statewide data. The number [equals](#) the population of [Oceanside](#). Service industry workers earning tips can legally be paid less than the minimum.

Dean Norton, president of the state [Farm Bureau](#), said raising the minimum wage would make growers uncompetitive.

"We must control costs to keep the barn doors open," he said.

Still, backers of higher wage rates want more to be done.

Jon Cooper, president of Spectronics Corp., a [Westbury](#)-based maker of ultraviolet equipment and fluorescent materials, called the [Albany](#) pact "a step in the right direction, but it's not a living wage." He is a former leader of the [Suffolk](#) County Legislature's Democratic majority.

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