

# **Brennan Center Hails Six-State Sweep to Raise Minimum Wage**

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## **Contact**

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## **Brennan Center Hails Six-State Sweep to Raise Minimum Wage**

*Red and Blue State Voters Send a Message to Washington for Working Families*

**New York** — Today the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law hailed the passage of ballot initiatives in six states that will raise the minimum wage and adjust it in future years to keep up with the cost of living. Economists estimate that over 1.5 million workers will benefit from these minimum wage increases.

Lawyers from the Brennan Center provided legal assistance and other support to the wage campaigns in Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana and Ohio. These states, together with Nevada where yesterday voters also approved a wage hike, join a growing list of 28 states that have raised their state minimum wage over the federal level.

"Voters in the Red states and in the Blue states sent one clear message to Washington on Tuesday: working families are struggling and need a raise," stated Michael Waldman, Executive Director of the Brennan Center. "We hope Congress was listening."

"This issue has reached a tipping point," stated Paul Sonn, Deputy Director of the Brennan Center's Poverty Program. "After years of being left behind by politicians in Washington, voters at the grass-roots are sending a message to Congress that they're tired of working harder and harder for less money. We need a minimum wage that keeps up with the cost of living. The current national minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour, or \$10,000 a year, just doesn't cut it."

"The federal government has not increased the minimum wage in a decade, even as worker productivity has shot up by a third and members of Congress and CEOs are taking home more and more," stated Annette Bernhardt, Deputy Director of the Brennan Center's Poverty Program. "Voters have clearly had enough. Even in states where other races were close, the support for a wage hike was strong."

In Missouri and Montana, 76% and 73% of voters, respectively, supported the minimum wage hike, even as Republicans and Democrats were sharply divided in contests for the U.S. Senate in both states. Among the six states considering minimum wage increases on Tuesday, 62% of votes cast were in support of raising the minimum wage.

State campaigns to raise the minimum wage have won lopsided victories in recent elections, with Florida and Nevada approving minimum wage increases in the 2004 election. Since 1994, more than 140 cities have passed living wage ordinances to raise wages at the local level.

Two of the Brennan Center's collaborators on Tuesday included the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

"Americans of all political stripes are worried about their financial future and on Tuesday they sent a message that Congress should be worried too. We hope Congress takes a hard look at the results in these states and finally raises the federal minimum wage and gets to work on an agenda to boost the struggling middle class," concluded Waldman.

Michael Waldman, Executive Director of the Brennan Center for Justice and former Director of Speechwriting and Assistant to the President in the Clinton White House is available to discuss the impact of minimum wage victories across the country. In addition to Waldman, Paul Sonn, Deputy Director of the Brennan Center's Poverty Program and lead advisor to many minimum wage campaigns and Annette Bernhardt, Ph.D., Deputy Director of the Brennan Center's Poverty Program and author of *Low Wage America* (Russell Sage, 2004) are available to discuss the minimum wage victories and their impact on the national political debate about the economy.