

# Living Wage Ordinances in New York

## **Albany NY – July 2005**

The Albany City Council has passed a Living Wage bill, requiring contractors doing business with the city to pay their employees at least \$10.25 an hour. Most contractors with the city already paid their workers this amount so the bill is expected to have a relatively mild impact.

There was no organized opposition to the proposal and the council voted 14-0 in its favor. The new law takes effect Jan. 1 and applies to companies that have service contracts valued at \$20,000 or more, or where a contractor collects a fee from the city of at least \$30,000 annually. The hourly rate will increase with the consumer price index kept by the U.S. Labor Department.

## **Syracuse NY - May 2005**

On May 23rd 2005 the City of Syracuse Common Council unanimously passed a Living Wage Ordinance mandating covered employers pay a wage of \$10.08/hour to employees receiving healthcare benefits and \$11.91 for those without (to be eligible to pay the lower wage, employers must pay at least 64% of their employees health care costs). The ordinance applies to contractors with the city and their sub-contractors, working on city contracts worth at least \$20,000 and who have more than 5 employees. Only employees working 30 years or more are covered. City employees are not covered by the ordinance. The ordinance also indexes the wage rate to the CPI-U with annual increases to be effective April each year, and mandates employees receive 12 paid days off. A Living Wage Advisory Board will be set up to monitor the ordinance which takes effect 120 days after passage (passed 23 May 2005) and applies to all contracts new or renewed after that date.

## **New York City NY - November 2002**

On November 27, Mayor Bloomberg signed into law a living wage ordinance that covers more workers than any other such law in the country. The law will apply to about 50,000 employees of service contractors doing business with the city, principally health care workers, as well as a handful of day care, food service and disability service workers. The current living wage is set at \$9.50 plus health benefits or \$11.10 if benefits are not provided by the employer (05/05). The wage rate will rise in two steps until it reaches \$10.00 an hour in July of 2006 (ACORN, Working Families Party with assistance from the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law).

## **Westchester County NY - November 2002**

In November, the County Legislature approved a law will ensure pay of at least \$10 per hour plus health benefits, or \$11.50 an hour without benefits (7/03) for most service contractors doing at least \$50,000 of business with the county, mainly those providing home healthcare workers, janitors, and security guards. The bill also covers firms receiving \$100,000 or more in economic development assistance from the county in the form of loans, grants, tax abatements, etc. The living wage will kick in January 2004, rise to \$10.75 base wage plus \$1.50 for benefits as of Jan. 1, 2005, and \$11.50 an hour with \$1.50 for benefits in 2006. For the more than 1000 child care workers in county programs, the law establishes a task force which will examine different models for implementing the living wage and will submit a proposal to the county legislature by August 2003 (Working Families Party, assisted by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law).

## **Hempstead (Long Island), NY - October 2001**

[Repealed 12/01] In October, the Board of Trustees of the Village of Hempstead passed a living wage law that requires recipients of city service contracts and economic development assistance to pay employees on city projects at least \$9.00 an hour if health benefits are provided or \$10.25 if not (ACORN, Working Families Party).

## **Oyster Bay NY - August 2001**

In August, the Town Board passed a living wage law requiring service contractors and subcontractors performing at least \$50,000 worth of janitorial or security services for the town to pay at least \$9.00 an hour, or \$10.25 an hour if health benefits are not provided. (05/05)(Working Families Party)

## **Suffolk County NY - July 2001**

In July, the Suffolk County Legislature adopted a law establishing a living wage for the county. Under the law, recipients of county assistance in the form of loans, grants or tax abatements valued at \$50,000 or more, and service contractors at more than \$10,000 must pay a living wage of \$9.64 an hour. If health benefits worth at least \$1.25 an hour are not offered, the applicable living wage rate is \$10.98. (05/05) The law extends to tenants and leaseholders of beneficiaries, as well as their subcontractors. Youth employment programs and small businesses with fewer than 10 employees are not covered. Non-profits can be exempted for up to a year after passage of the law, if the ratio of pay from the highest paid employee to the lowest does not exceed 6:1, or the non-profit can demonstrate that its budget will increase more than 10% as a result of the living wage requirement. Child care employees have a separate living wage rate of

\$9.00, or \$7.75 if health care is provided. (Long Island Federation of Labor, Working Families Party, NY Labor and Religion Coalition)

### **Rochester NY - January 2001**

In January, the Rochester City Council passed an ordinance which requires all employers who enter into city service contracts worth at least \$50,000 to pay employees on those contracts a living wage of at least \$9.43 an hour, \$10.43 if health benefits are not provided, indexed annually to inflation. (06/05) The ordinance further provides that such living wage requirement be extended to all recipients of economic development assistance from the city at such time as the County enacts a similar requirement. Covered employers are required to report annually on job titles and wage rates of covered employees

### **Buffalo NY - August 1999**

In August, the Buffalo City Council approved an ordinance requiring city service contractors and subcontractors working on contracts greater than \$50,000 to pay workers (including workfare workers) to pay a living wage. Required wages are to be phased in over three years starting at \$6.22/hour in 2000, \$7.15 in 2001, increasing to \$8.08 in 2002 for employers providing health benefits. Currently the rate is \$9.03, or \$10.15 for employees not receiving health benefits. (7/04) In addition, the ordinance requires that applicants for contracts submit information on projected hiring and wage goals prior to award, and submit quarterly reports on hiring and wages after securing a contract (Coalition for Economic Justice, Citizen Action of NY, Buffalo AFL-CIO). The ordinance is enforced and managed by a volunteer commission.

## PROPOSED ORDINANCES/CAMPAIGNS

### Yonkers, September 2005

Three city council members are calling for a guarantee that all workers hired at the proposed Ridge Hill Village project receive a living wage and health benefits.

### Broome County, October 2005

Broome County legislators rejected a proposed "Living Wage" bill due to concerns over its effect on the area's economy and whether it would help intended beneficiaries. Lawmakers voted 18-1 against the bill. A revised proposal may be reconsidered next year after further research. The law would have required county contractors to pay their employees at least \$9.10 an hour if health insurance is included in the wage, or \$10.75 if medical benefits are not provided.

### Rockland County (ongoing)

The Rockland County ordinance would require wages levels equal to 110% of the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four in year 1 - \$10.35 an hour with benefits and \$12.85 without rising to 125% of FPL by year 3. 10 paid days off per year to be used for vacation or sick leave. Coverage: Businesses providing at least \$10,000 a year of contract services to the county; Businesses receiving tax breaks, incentives or subsidies wholly or partially funded by the county; Non-profit organizations providing at least \$25,000 a year of contract services to the county (\$50,000 during the first year of the law); Tenants on county owned property; Leaseholders who lease from the county.