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Community Coalitions File Ballot Initiatives to Raise Minimum Wage Around the Bay

Advocates File Petitions for Public Votes in Richmond and Berkeley

Campaigns Already Underway in San Francisco and Oakland

Community coalitions in Richmond and Berkeley today filed petitions to begin the process of qualifying ballot measures to raise the minimum wage in each city. Campaigns for similar initiatives are already underway in Oakland and San Francisco, giving voters around the Bay Area the opportunity to put into place a regional strategy to raise the minimum wage, in order to combat economic inequality.

The Richmond ballot measure calls for a minimum wage of \$12.25 by March, 2015, with paid sick leave and cost-of-living increases. The Berkeley ballot measure calls for a minimum wage of \$15.00 in 2016, also with paid sick leave and cost-of-living increases. Emerging coalitions of community groups and labor organizations are filing these latest initiatives, each of which includes SEIU 1021, which represents over 54,000 public service workers across Northern California.

The proponents for the Richmond ballot measure are Tarnel Abbott from the Richmond Progressive Alliance, Eric Stern from SEIU 1021, and Christiana Guevara, RN, from the California Nurses Association. The proponents for the Berkeley ballot measure include Wendy Bloom, RN, from the California Nurses Association, Barry Fike from the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, and Larry Bradshaw from SEIU 1021. The Richmond measure would appear on the ballot in 2014, while the Berkeley measure would appear in 2016.

The elections throughout the Bay Area will give tens of thousands of residents the chance to rise out of poverty, and will strengthen the local economy, infusing it with millions of dollars, thereby creating new jobs and generating tax revenue for schools and public safety. Corporate democrats and republicans in each of the cities have tried to water down the minimum wage proposals with loopholes, carve-outs, or lower pay that will not have the same benefits for the community.

“People around the Bay Area strongly support raising the minimum wage, and we are excited that so many will get a chance to vote for it this year,” said Gary Jimenez, a Vice-President of SEIU 1021 and President of Lift Up Oakland. “Our crisis of economic inequality is so deep and painful that we need to give voters the chance to be heard.”

**Organizational names for identification purposes only.*

“We think that \$12.25 is the minimum needed just to put food on the table and survive in the Bay Area today,” said Richmond proponent Shantie Shaw, a low-wage worker. “We have a moral obligation to treat our workers with dignity and respect—and that means ensuring they earn enough to eat.”

"There are already incredible impacts on people's health when they live in poverty," said Berkeley proponent Wendy Bloom, RN. "In addition to raising the minimum wage, it is in everyone's interest to include paid sick leave for employees. It is wrong to force sick people to work, and it puts the public's health at risk."

The Richmond proposals are modeled after an Oakland initiative sponsored by Lift Up Oakland, which is expected to turn in signatures to qualify later this week. Lift Up Oakland comprises the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE), Raise the Wage East Bay, Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), SEIU 1021, SEIU ULTCW, UFCW Local 5, and UNITE HERE 2850.

The Berkeley ballot measure is also modeled after the Oakland initiative, with wages in line with a San Francisco ballot measure, filed earlier this year by the Campaign for a Fair Economy (CFE), which seeks to raise its minimum wage to over \$15.30 by 2017. CFE comprises the San Francisco Labor Council, SEIU 1021, the Progressive Worker Alliance, UNITE HERE Local 2, the California Nurses Association, Jobs With Justice, the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Chinese Progressive Association, Young Workers United, and SF Rising.

In order to qualify for the ballot, the Richmond coalition must submit 6,259 valid signatures, and the Berkeley coalition must submit 5,275. Signatures are due in San Francisco and Richmond early this summer.

SEIU Local 1021 represents over 54,000 employees in local governments, non-profit agencies, health care programs and schools throughout Northern California. SEIU Local 1021 is a diverse, member driven organization with members who work to make our cities, schools, counties and special districts a safe and healthy place to live and raise our families. We nurse our sick, educate our children, clean our schools, care for our seniors and developmentally disabled. Our mission is to ensure that all workers and their families have a voice in our Union, as well as our workplace, government, and communities. We envision a society where all workers and their families live and work in dignity and respect.

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