

## Living Wage-Minimum Wage

Following guidance from LWVUS that Leagues could support a minimum wage increase for their area (under the national position on meeting basic human needs) after conducting appropriate research, the State League decided to conduct research on minimum wage-living wage in New York State. The Living Wage Committee was created to determine what an appropriate living wage is for our state and its localities and to define the relationship between a living wage and the minimum wage. The League believes that one of the goals of social policy should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. We define a living wage as one that provides sufficient income without government assistance, for food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, education, child care, and a small amount of discretionary income.

### Livable Wage

#### **Statement of Position**

**As announced by the State Board, December 2015**

Support of a livable wage for all localities in New York State determined by using either of the following calculators (or one that may in the future be developed which includes the same items), whichever has been updated most recently. Each of these calculators presents its findings of the costs involved in meeting basic human needs on a county-by-county basis, for families of different sizes and composition, and indicates the wage needed to meet those costs on an hourly, monthly and annual basis.

1. This is the link to the MIT developed calculator for a living wage, which is available by County in NYS: <http://livingwage.mit.edu> Originally done in 2004, it was updated in 2014.

2. The self-sufficiency standard developed by Empire Justice Center/NYS Community Action Association <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/docs/New-York-State2010.pdf> especially pp. 57 to 89, which lists the self-sufficiency standard for different family configurations for each county, and expresses it on an hourly/monthly/annual basis. P 91 compares the self-sufficiency standard to the federal poverty rate.

We further support that the minimum wage, if set state-wide, be set no higher than, but close to, the living wage for a family consisting of one wage earner and 2 children, in the county with the lowest living costs. The League has long supported equal pay for equal work, and does not recommend that the minimum wage be set, or employers pay employees, based on the number of their dependents. On the other hand employees working full-time at the minimum wage should be able to make a living wage for themselves and one to two dependents.

### Recent League Activity

In 2016, after determining our new position, the League quickly took action and came out in support of increasing New York's minimum wage. The League submitted budget testimony to the Joint Committees on Work Force Development encouraging them to follow the MIT developed calculator to determine a proper livable wage. The testimony also supported the implementation of paid family leave for all New Yorkers. We were pleased when Governor

Cuomo announced that the legislature had agreed to a budget that raised the minimum wage. This will occur in increments: In NYC it would reach \$15 and in the rest of the state \$12.50 by 2020. After 2020, the DOB gets to decide how many more years it will take the rest of the state to reach \$15.