

Move to Renege on Minimum Wage Compromise Called “Shameful Breach of Trust”

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Delaware’s Republican legislative leaders are condemning a measure to break a compromise that was struck in the closing hours of last year’s legislative session over a controversial minimum wage hike.

The settlement ended an impasse that occurred after House and Senate Democrats attempted to use their majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate to ramrod a minimum wage hike through the legislature in the wee hours of July 1st. Senate Bill 170 sought to increase the state's \$8.25-per-hour minimum wage by \$1 an hour in two steps of 50 cents each. The measure was brought to the House floor for a vote, without the required committee hearing, at 3:30 a.m.

Republicans balked at the lack of transparency and subversion of rules designed to ensure public participation in the legislative process.

After hours of negotiations, the measure was ultimately approved, but not before Republicans secured two key modifications (House Bill 483):

- Establishing a new "training wage" -- allowing an employer to pay an adult employee an hourly rate 50 cents under the minimum wage during the first 90 days of employment.
- Establishing a "youth wage" -- allowing an employer to pay an employee, under the age of 18, an hourly wage 50 cents less than the minimum.

House Bill 47, filed today, seeks to strike down both provisions. The measure has 35 Democratic sponsors and co-sponsors, including 25 that were part of the 149th General Assembly.

“The elimination of the training and youth wages hurts young people and the unemployed,” said Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker (R-Ocean View). “It has been proven that higher government-mandated wages reduce the opportunities for young people to secure their all-important first jobs, which position them for future employment. For the Democrats to do this, especially going back on their word, is unacceptable.”

“If Democratic lawmakers move forward on this bill, it will be a shameful breach of trust,” said House Minority Leader Danny Short (R-Seaford). “They already broke faith last year when they tried to ram their minimum wage bill through the legislature in the middle of the night while most of the state slept. Reneging on the reasonable compromise we struck to end that impasse will destroy their credibility with us.”

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