LAB 2014-01 Automatic Adjustments of Minimum Wage to Keep Its Value Despite Inflation

Whereas, The Hawai‘i State Legislature passed a long overdue adjustment to the minimum wage after a delay of eight years, during which time low-wage employees saw significant losses in the value of their already low wages due to legislative inaction; and

Whereas, The main vehicle bills in both the House and the Senate included provisions which would have automatically adjusted the minimum wage each year after 2018 to reflect the change in the Consumer Price Index for the state of Hawai‘i; and

Whereas, The states of Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont and Washington all have such CPI adjustment provisions in their minimum wage laws; and

Whereas, Most of those states are so-called “Red States,” run by Republicans, who make no pretense of being a political party sympathetic to working people, unlike Hawaii’s legislature; and

Whereas, This last eight-year period when the value of the minimum wage deteriorated in the face of inflation was not unusual, as the Hawai‘i legislature delayed raising it for 6 years between 1981 and 1987 and let it erode in value for 9 years between 1993 and 2002; and

Whereas, The ability of struggling low-wage workers to feed their families, pay their bills and buy the necessities of life should not be subject to the difficulties of organizing every few years to press their argument for a wage hike when the need to have a wage keep its steady value is obvious, and this CPI adjustment mechanism has been used in several other states for over a dozen years and is easy to implement; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i calls upon its candidates and legislators holding office under our party banner to pass legislation to implement an annual adjustment of the minimum wage to preserve its value as the Cost of Living changes; and be it,

Resolved, Such legislation should be in place to take effect in 2019, the first year after the final scheduled incremental hike of the minimum wage passed in the 2014 session; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to Democratic members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature, the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, and the members of Hawai‘i’s Congressional Delegation.
Whereas, One of purposes and promise of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i is to build a fair, equitable society where all people can find jobs in a growing full-employment economy; and

Whereas, Past regional trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have demonstrably resulted in the export of thousands of living wage jobs; and

Whereas, Further export of living-wage jobs undermines the physical and economic security of the United States by weakening our manufacturing base; and

Whereas, Export of living-wage blue and white collar jobs further divides Americans into ever smaller numbers of “haves” and ever growing numbers of “have-nots”; and

Whereas, The Trans-Pacific Partnership, called “NAFTA on steroids”, as proposed does not safeguard U.S. jobs; and

Whereas, Highly profitable corporations have paid extremely low wages requiring poverty assistance programs to spend $7 billion in 2012 alone to help these corporations’ workers survive; and

Whereas, These poverty programs are now being targeted for elimination in the GOP budget conference committee proposals which preclude an increase in government revenues and therefore force a decrease in vital government assistance, making our society even more unfair; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i vigorously opposes provisions in the Trans-Pacific Partnership that would result in the net export of living-wage jobs and vigorously supports global agreements that respect workers; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i supports immediate legislation to include sustainable infrastructure renewal throughout the United States, with jobs training and re-training programs funded by corporations; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i supports raising the minimum wage to a real living wage which will stop subsidizing major corporations through public assistance programs; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party calls for revisions in the tax code to incentivize corporations to locate jobs in the U.S. and de-incentivize exporting jobs, and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Democratic members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature, the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai‘i and all members of Hawai‘i’s Congressional Delegation.
LAB 2014-03 Repeal Act 167/Act 52

Whereas, Since the passage of Act 167, schools across Hawai‘i have been working towards implementing a bell schedule to conform to Act 167 which required; 2011-12 school year, 50 percent of all public elementary schools in State … shall implement a school year that includes 915 student instructional hours (1,525 instructional minutes per week), and beginning with 2012-2013 school years, all public secondary school … shall implement a school year that includes 915 student instructional hours, for the 2016-2018 school years, all public schools … shall implement a school year of one hundred eighty days … that include one thousand eighty student instructional hours for both elementary and secondary schools; and

Whereas, school administrators and teachers have made a good faith effort to implement the requirements of Act 167 including spending a great amount of time on numerous meetings and developing plans; and

Whereas, Despite this good faith effort, many secondary schools are having difficulty in implementing their bell schedules to comply with Act 167; and

Whereas, Many elementary and secondary schools are also forced to use opening, closing, homeroom and study hall time to count as student instructional time under Act 167; and

Whereas, Act 52 amended Act 167; and

Whereas, Act 167/ACT 52 should be repealed because it is an unfunded mandate that causes bigger class sizes and is not being implemented by some schools with fidelity; and

Whereas, The Legislature feels that decisions regarding instructional time are best accomplished through a process that includes input from teachers and school administrators; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i shall urge the Legislature to repeal ACT 167/ACT 52 and support that instructional hours should remain subject to the collective bargaining process and negotiated between the Hawai‘i State Teachers Association and the Board of Education; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson and members of the Board of Education, the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Superintendent for the Department of Education for the State of Hawai‘i, and all Democratic members of the State of Hawai‘i’s Legislature.
Teacher Pay in Hawai‘i Should Not Be The Worst In The Country

Whereas, When factoring in the cost of living, teachers in Hawai‘i are paid the worst in the country; and

Whereas, The Hawai‘i State Department of Education previously spent twenty million dollars annually to train and recruit teachers to move to Hawai‘i, yet 60% of them left within three years; and

Whereas, Competitive salary is essential to the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers; and

Whereas, According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the average salary for a public teacher in Hawai‘i is $51,922, but after adjusting for cost of living, that average plummets to just $31,854. Cost of living is measured by the ACCRA Cost of Living Index which accounts for housing, utilities, transportation, groceries, health care, and miscellaneous consumer products. The average public teacher salary in Hawai‘i is consistently the lowest; and

Whereas, Teaching positions are being filled with emergency hires, from July 2013-January 2014 the DOE hired 1741 teacher with no State Approved Teacher Education Program and 725 teachers who had yet to pass the statewide praxis exam; and

Whereas, Unlike the mainland, teachers in Hawai‘i are not recognized for their experience through annual increments, gaining a yearly boost in pay for every year of experience; an

Whereas, Pay is synonymous with respect, many teachers simply to do not feel respected in this State with the salary they receive; and

Whereas, Numerous teachers are dependent on a second job to enable them to pay bills, which has turned the teaching profession in Hawai‘i into a part-time job; and

Whereas, Students have to go into substantial debt to become teachers, unlike other professions who now with overtime are able to go straight into their profession with the ability to make upwards of a six-figure salary; and

Whereas, Finland has been regarded as the country with the best education in the world. Their teachers do not go into debt for college and can receive a six-figure salary; and

Whereas, The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i believes in the right to collectively bargain; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i urges Hawai‘i State Governor, The Chairperson and members of the Board of Education and the Department of Education Superintendent annually to provide a respectable full-time salary, that is not the worst in the country; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be sent to the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, all members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature who are Democrats, and all members of Hawai‘i State Board of Education.
Whereas, Companies often change hands in Hawai‘i, leaving workers at risk of losing their jobs; in many cases, these workers are terminated and asked to reapply for their jobs by the new owner, even if the worker has held the same job for 10, 20 or 30 years; and

Whereas, Very often, the new employer eliminates workers who, while experienced, may be older and less physically able, as a means to skirt discrimination laws that would have otherwise kept them from replacing workers due to age, disability, limited English skills, etc.; and

Whereas, This type of wholesale termination of employees is disruptive to the workforce and to the community, especially a small community where mass layoffs could loss of jobs for several members of the same family, upsetting the economic equilibrium in a community; examples of this type of behavior by employers are abundant; and

Whereas, On New Year’s Eve in 1986 when 126 employees of the Airport Holiday Inn were told they would have no job in the New Year; this employer’s egregious action led to the passage in 1987 of the Dislocated Worker Act, the first in the nation to require notification in the event of a mass layoff; and

Whereas, Another example is the Grand Wailea Resort, bought by KSL in 1998 and required all workers to reapply for their jobs; many experienced workers lost their jobs; and

Whereas, Yet in 2006, when Grand Wailea went through another management change, no one was displaced, business continued uninterrupted, and the new employer earned the gratitude and loyalty of an experienced workforce; and

Whereas, As Grand Wailea and other companies have experienced, retention of workers in a management change is not onerous and provides for an orderly transition from one employer to another; employees, their families, and the community are spared needless disruption and distress; the employer retains management rights and can be assured of productivity and loyalty from an experienced and skilled incumbent workforce; and

Whereas, A worker retention law can: specify who will be covered (i.e., include supervisory employees or not); establish the size of companies that will be affected (i.e., employers with 50 or more, or employers with 100 or more employees); establish retention goals; allow pre-hire screenings and probationary periods; affirm that management will retain certain rights; and provide for exclusions from the law (i.e., if the new business is not the same as the old or if the new business plans to shrink the size of the business, retention goals can be reduced); and

Whereas, Such a new law would prevent employers from circumventing existing laws that now allow workers to unionize and protect workers from discrimination; the law will allow workers a more level playing field against their employers who hold the keys to their livelihood; a worker retention law can be a “win-win” situation for all; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i supports Legislation to provide for retention of the incumbent workforce by a new employer in the event of a change of management whether due to sale, change in management contract or lease, etc.; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i urges the Hawai‘i State Government to enact a worker retention law that would provide for the orderly transition of employees from one employer to another while providing for safeguards to protect the employer’s interests; and be it

Ordered, That copies be transmitted to the Democratic members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature.
LAB 2014-07 Ensure That Hawaii’s Workers Will Have Access to Paid and Protected Sick and Safe Time

Whereas, One in 6 adults nationally report that they, or a family member, have been fired, suspended, punished, or threatened by an employer because they needed to take sick time for themselves or a family member; and

Whereas, More than 40 percent of private-sector workers nationally and 43 percent of private-sector workers in Hawai‘i (more than 174,000 workers) do not have paid sick time they can use to recover from a common, short-term illness such as the flu; and

Whereas, Many workers who do earn personal sick time, cannot use that time to care for an ill child or close family member; and

Whereas, Low-wage workers are particularly unlikely to earn paid sick time, are among the least able to afford to take unpaid sick time, and are among the most at risk of long-term unemployment after losing a job; and

Whereas, Workers’ inability to access paid sick time contributes to a drain on business productivity and increased risk of illnesses spreading throughout workplaces to customers and co-workers; and

Whereas, Workers’ inability to access paid sick time leads to unnecessary emergency room visits and higher health care costs; and

Whereas, Parental care makes children’s recovery faster and prevents future health problems; and

Whereas, Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking often cannot access needed “safe” time to seek legal and relocation services; and

Whereas, Losing a job can be particularly devastating for survivors of domestic violence who often need economic security to ensure their and their children’s safety; and

Whereas, The Democratic Party of Hawai‘i applauds legislators for passing such a law in 2011, but unfortunately this law did not go far enough, and only pertained to collective-bargaining agreements and was struck down by a High Court due to violating the equal protection clause; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, Democratic Party of Hawai‘i urges the Legislature to pass such a law that includes all workers and does not exclude anyone from such a law; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i affirms that all workers should have the right to earn paid and protected sick and safe time; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i endorses the proposed Federal Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1876/S. 984) and urges its passage; and be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i strongly urges the Hawai‘i State Legislature to pass legislation to ensure that all of Hawai‘i’s workers will have access to earned paid sick and safe time; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution be delivered to the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, the Lt. Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, Cabinet, members of all the County Councils, Mayors, Democratic Members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature, and all members of Hawai‘i’s Congressional Delegation.