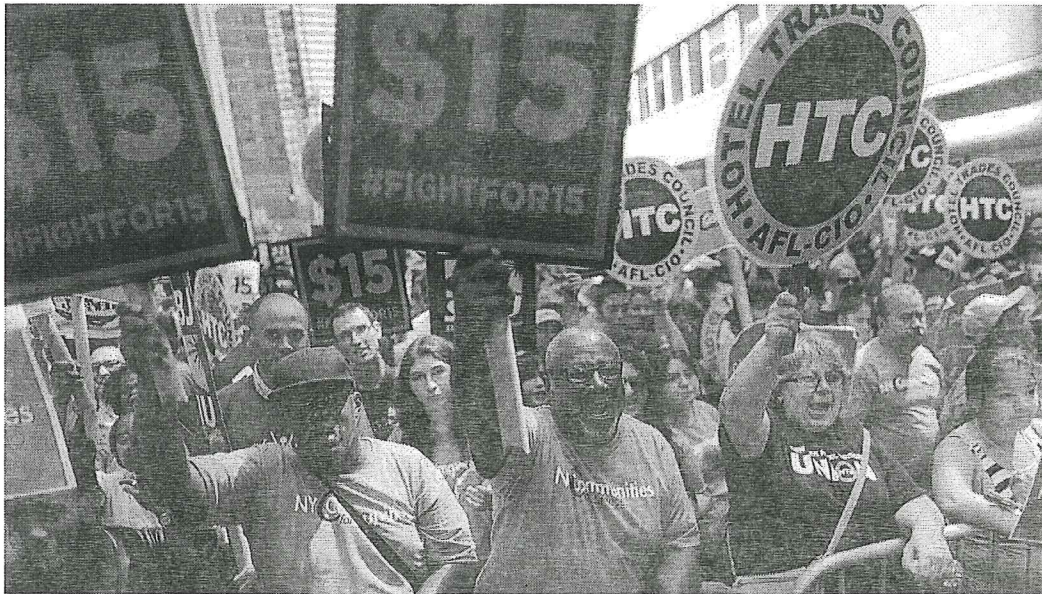


# Fast-food workers serve message to presidential hopefuls

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.25.15

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Activists cheer during a rally in New York City after the New York Wage Board endorsed a proposal to set a \$15 minimum wage for workers at fast-food restaurants with 30 or more locations in New York, July 22, 2015 Photo: AP/Mary Altaffer

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Workers from McDonald's, Taco Bell and other fast-food restaurant chains protested nationwide Tuesday. They demanded that they be paid at least \$15 an hour.

The protesters also had a message for the men and women now running to become president of the United States: Support their cause or lose their vote next year.

The protests were part of a campaign called "Fight for \$15." The larger goal of that campaign is to get the nationwide minimum wage raised to \$15 an hour.

A minimum wage is the least amount of money per hour an employer is legally allowed to pay. There are both local and national minimum wages.

## **Increase Would Apply To All Low-wage Workers**

The increase fast-food workers are seeking would not just apply to them. It would benefit all low-wage employees across the country.

The fast-food protests took place in more than 270 cities nationwide. Janitors, nursing home workers and package delivery workers joined some protests.

Dominique McCrae joined a protest outside a McDonald's in Durham, North Carolina. McCrae, who is 23, serves fried chicken and biscuits at a Bojangles' restaurant for \$7.55 an hour. She said she dropped out of college to care for her grandfather. Her pay is not enough to both cover her rent and properly care for her child, she said.

"We just want to be able to support our families," McCrae said.

Bojangles' said its wages are better than what many similar companies offer.

## **Some Candidates Agree With Protesters**

The "Fight for \$15" campaign began about three years ago. Several past protests also took place outside fast-food restaurants.

This time workers are pledging not to vote for presidential candidates who do not support the campaign. Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders both expressed their support. Sanders also showed up at a protest outside the Senate in Washington. The Democrats and Republicans are the two main parties in the ongoing presidential elections.

McDonald's worker Adriana Alvarez said she plans to vote for the first time next year. She said she will only vote for a candidate who wants to raise wages to \$15 an hour. Alvarez, who is 23 and lives in Chicago, makes \$10.50 an hour. Higher pay would help her move out of the moldy basement apartment she shares with her 3-year-old son, she said.

"I can find a better place," she said.

## **Minimum Wage Debate Continues To Rage**

The average restaurant worker earns \$11.51 an hour. However, chain restaurants like McDonald's or Taco Bell often pay far less.

Experts have long disagreed about the wisdom of raising the minimum wage. Some claim that wage hikes only end up hurting workers. They say that if they have to pay higher wages, they will have to fire some workers. Other experts say raising the minimum can do a lot to help workers and their families.

Recent research has found that small wage increases seldom lead to many lost jobs. However, a jump to \$15 an hour would more than double the national minimum wage, which is now \$7.25 an hour. Such a jump would be the highest increase ever. For that reason, most experts are unsure about what might happen.

On Tuesday, McDonald's said wages at the U.S. restaurants it owns are now \$1 over the local minimum wage. However, most U.S. McDonald's locations are independently owned and run. Wages in those restaurants are not set by the parent company but by the local owner.

### **Companies Say They Have Limited Control**

Rival Burger King said it supports "the right to demonstrate." It added that it hopes "any demonstrators will respect the safety of our restaurant guests and employees." The company also said that many of its restaurants are independently operated. Owners of those restaurants set wages, not the parent company.

Yum Brands is behind both Taco Bell and KFC. It said workers for the two restaurant chains are paid above minimum wage. However, that is only true for the 2,000 restaurants the company owns. The other restaurants are independently operated and wages are set by individual owners.

At a New York rally, a few hundred people cheered and clapped.

Some at the rally were not fast-food workers. Liz Henry, 38, works at a New York hospital. She said she makes more than \$15 per hour but supports the effort for other workers.

"Even what I'm making right now is not even enough," she says. "How do they really get by? It's hard."

## Quiz

- 1 Read the sentence from the section "Some Candidates Agree With Protesters."

*This time workers are pledging not to vote for presidential candidates who do not support the campaign.*

Which of the following words would BEST replace the word "pledging" in the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) asking
  - (B) hoping
  - (C) promising
  - (D) reminding
- 2 Read the following excerpt.

*Such a jump would be the highest increase ever. For that reason, most experts are unsure about what might happen.*

What does the word "unsure" indicate in the sentence above?

- (A) The outcome of the situation is not easy to predict.
  - (B) The situation is hard for people who are not experts to understand.
  - (C) The experts are not concerned about the outcome of the situation.
  - (D) The experts are hopeful about resolving the questions surrounding the situation.
- 3 Which of the following points of view are presented in the section "Increase Would Apply To All Low-wage Workers"?

1. *a fast-food worker*
2. *a boss*
3. *a company*

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) 2 only
- (D) 1 and 3

- 4 Read the section "Companies Say They Have Limited Control." Which of the following statements BEST represents the point of view of the fast-food companies?
- (A) Protesting is going to have a negative effect on sales in our restaurants.
  - (B) We do not decide how much workers are paid in all of our restaurants.
  - (C) Increasing the minimum wage will cause us to let many of our workers go.
  - (D) Increasing the minimum wage will cause our products to be priced much higher.