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75% of New York Voters Across Partisan Groups Support Eliminating Tipped Minimum Wage in Favor of One Fair Wage, Poll Reveals

Wage Board Decision on Future of New York's \$5 Tipped Minimum Wage Expected in Coming Days

Poll results available here:

http://rocunited.org/wp2015b/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/OneFairWage_NYpoll.pdf

New York, NY — A survey of 400 likely 2016 voters found that 75% of respondents favor the proposal to increase the minimum wage for tipped workers until it is at the same level as the regular minimum wage with support growing to 79% respondents were presented with all messaging. The poll was commissioned by Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United and conducted by Lake Research Partners.

The findings are released as the New York Wage Board heads into the final days of deliberation on the future of New York's tipped minimum wage, currently \$5 an hour. As a condition of reaching a deal, which excluded tipped workers from New York's most recent minimum wage increase, Governor Cuomo created the Wage Board in July. Convened by Labor Commissioner Peter Rivera, the Wage Board has held four public hearings with a deadline of early February to release a recommendation, but the decision is expected early January.

Key findings of the survey include:

- Before hearing any messaging, **three-fourths of likely 2016 voters (75%) favor the proposal to increase the minimum wage** for tipped workers until it is at the same level as the regular minimum wage, with support **growing to 79%** after respondents were presented with messaging.
- Support spans partisan groups with 87% of Democrats, 88% of Independents, and 52% of Republicans support eliminating the tipped minimum wage, with 68% of all respondents **'strongly favoring'** the proposal to increase the minimum wage for tipped workers to the full minimum wage.
- Every demographic and political group supports raising the minimum wage for tipped workers. Support for the proposal is especially strong among Democrats, Independents, African Americans, and voters in New York City. But even Upstate, voters favor increasing the minimum wage for tipped workers by a more than 3 to 1 margin.
- Arguments against raising the tipped minimum wage fell flat as voters found all opposition arguments were not convincing reasons to oppose raising the tipped minimum wage. For example, although 21% of voters found the statement "raising the minimum wage for tipped

workers will cost consumers” ‘very convincing,’ a majority (53%) found this argument not convincing.

“It’s clear that if New York becomes the eighth state to eliminate the tipped minimum wage, the decision would be met with widespread public support,” said **Meg Fosque, National Policy Director of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United**. “The majority of New York voters, across partisan groups, simply aren’t buying the corporate restaurant lobby’s fear mongering and see the two-tiered wage system for what it is -- an unfair and unnecessary system. Voters across the country are increasingly frustrated with rising income inequality and stagnant wages. The fact that servers are three-times as likely to live in poverty isn’t fair - voters get that. They want to see a change.”

“The restaurant industry has the highest rates of sexual harassment of any industry,” said **Saru Jayaraman, co-founder and co-director of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United**. “Given the Cuomo administration’s spotlight on women’s equality, it would be deeply disappointing for Commissioner Rivera to undermine New York’s voters desire for fair wages and instead let a system as discriminatory and sexist as the two-tiered wage system persist. Ninety-percent of female tipped workers experience sexual harassment, meaning that, for workers in one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the country, getting harassed is practically a condition of getting paid. To do right by New York’s voters means Labor Commissioner Peter Rivera and the Wage Board should absolutely recommend eliminating New York’s sub-minimum wage.”

The momentum to eliminate the tipped minimum wage has been echoed nationally by the Department of Labor and the Labor Secretary, Tom Perez. In an interview with NBC, Perez called the tipped minimum wage ‘colossally unfair’ because ‘while everyone has monthly overhead—rent utilities and the like—when you’re a tipped worker, you have no guarantee of how much money will come in... the tipped wage results in tipped workers, disproportionately women, really taking it on the chin.’ Hillary Clinton further highlighted the problems with the tipped minimum wage when she stated tipped workers are, “at the mercy not only of customers who can decide or not to tip. They’re at the mercy of their employers who may collect the tips and not turn them back.”

Governor-Appointed Wage Board Members voting in January are:

- Chair - Timothy Grippen, retired Broome County executive
- Heather C. Briccetti, President and CEO of the Business Council
- Peter Ward, President of the New York Hotel Trade Council

Spokespeople from ROC United and Lake Research Partners are available for interviews.

Additional Resources:

REPORT – The Glass Floor: Sexual Harassment in the US Restaurant Industry:
<http://rocunited.org/the-glass-floor-sexual-harassment-in-the-restaurant-industry>

BRIEF - Recipe for Success: The Impact of Raising the Subminimum Wage on Restaurant Sales and Employment: <http://rocunited.org/recipeforsuccess>

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Co-founded by leading workers' rights advocate Saru Jayaraman ("One of the top 50 most influential people in the restaurant industry" – Nation's Restaurant News) ROC United has grown to over 13,000 worker-members across 26 cities in the US, winning 15 worker-led campaigns, totaling \$8 million in stolen tips and wages.