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## LOS ANGELES APPROVES RAISING MINIMUM WAGE FOR LARGE-HOTEL WORKERS

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LOS ANGELES – The City Council approved one of the nation’s highest minimum wages for workers at large hotels here.

In a 12-3 vote on Wednesday, council members backed an ordinance establishing a minimum hourly wage of \$15.37 for workers at Los Angeles hotels with at least 125 guest rooms. If passed in a final vote next week, the ordinance would go into effect in July for hotels with more than 300 rooms. Those with at least 125 but fewer than 300 would have to comply by July 2016.

The move is the latest in an unfolding national trend. Last year the city of SeaTac, Wash., set a \$15 floor for workers tied to the major airport there. Nearby Seattle followed this summer, approving a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for all workers that will be rolled out over several years. San Francisco voters will consider a \$15 rate in November.

So far this year, 11 state legislatures have voted to enact minimum-wage increases, led by Massachusetts with an \$11-an-hour floor by 2017. President Barack Obama has pushed to raise the federal minimum to \$10.10 an hour from \$7.25, but such a measure has failed to gain support in Congress.

L.A.’s proposal would create one of the highest minimum wages in the country. The \$15.37-an-hour wage matches the living-wage standard in place at the Los Angeles International Airport business district and trails the bottom rate at a San Jose International Airport by a penny.

Los Angeles leaders are also considering another proposal by Mayor Eric Garcetti that would raise the citywide minimum wage to \$13.50 an hour, from the current \$9, over the next three years. Mr. Garcetti also expressed support for the ordinance passed on Wednesday.

More than 40 percent of Los Angeles hotel workers make a living below the federal poverty level, according to the ordinance. A study this week by the Economic Policy Roundtable, a Los Angeles think tank, found that the wage increases called for in the measure could generate \$70 million for the city’s economy.

Critics, including the Hotel Association of Los Angeles and the California Hotel & Lodging Association, say the proposal is discriminatory by targeting only hotel companies. “This is not fair,” said Bob Amano, executive director of the Hotel Association of Los Angeles. “Where does it say in the city’s charter that they [the City Council] now become the HR department for private enterprise?”

Mr. Amano said the mayor’s proposal for a citywide increase, which is more gradual, is “more sensible.”

Tom Walsh, president of Unite Here Local 11, said the law will help “even the playing field” between nonunionized and unionized Los Angeles hotels that already pay above \$15.37. The

hotel-workers union was a major backer of the proposal. The law's "effect will be very good, not just for hotel workers but for the entire city" because low-wage families will spend their additional earnings "right away," he said.

Nationally, economists are split on the benefits of increasing the minimum wage. A February report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found a national increase to \$10.10 an hour would reduce employment by about 500,000 jobs but lift almost a million Americans out of poverty.