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Massachusetts approves \$11 minimum wage

by Jeanne Sahadi @CNNMoney

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Massachusetts is on track to have the highest state minimum wage in the nation.

Lawmakers in the Bay State gave final approval on Thursday to legislation that will gradually raise the minimum to \$11 an hour by 2017, up from \$8 today. Governor Deval Patrick received the bill Thursday evening, said Jesse Mermell, a spokeswoman. He is expected to sign it into law soon.

While Massachusetts is taking the lead among states, the city of [Seattle](#), which recently approved an increase to [\\$15 an hour](#), still will offer the highest minimum anywhere in the country.

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President Obama, who supports a nationwide increase to \$10.10, applauded the move, saying Massachusetts "joins a growing coalition of states, cities and counties that are doing (their) part to make sure no American working full-time has to support a family in poverty."

The Massachusetts bill also raised the subminimum base wage for tipped workers to \$3.75 from \$2.63 currently. While advocates for a higher minimum wage applaud

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Massachusetts move, they say the increase for [tipped workers](#) is subpar.

Compared to other states, which have set higher wage bases for tipped workers, "Massachusetts is a real outlier," said Paul Sonn, general counsel for the National Employment Law Project. If a tipped worker doesn't earn the equivalent of the full minimum wage, after counting both the subminimum base plus tips, employers are supposed to make up the difference. But, Sonn said, "there' s a lot of room for evasion."

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Raising the minimum wage has become a bit of a trend at the state level. [Michigan](#) lawmakers also recently approved a phased-in increase to \$9.25 by 2018.

[Vermont](#) approved a bill last month that raises its minimum wage to \$10.50 by 2018 as well, as did [Maryland](#) lawmakers, who chose to raise that state's minimum to \$10.10.

Lawmakers in [Minnesota](#), [Delaware](#), [West Virginia](#), [Connecticut](#), [New York](#), [California](#) and [Hawaii](#) have also approved minimum wage hikes this year or last.

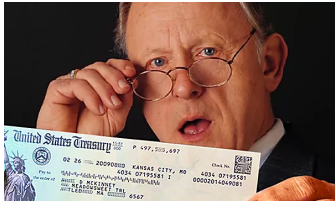
At the federal level, however, lawmakers have reached stall speed on the minimum wage issue. Senate Democrats have put forth a proposal to raise the federal minimum to \$10.10 an hour, up from \$7.25 currently. Even if it passes the Senate, it faces an uphill battle in the House.

CNNMoney's [American Dream Poll](#) earlier this month found that 71% of people surveyed favor a hike in the federal minimum wage. And of those, 36% said it should be increased to [\\$10.10 an hour](#), while 16% said it should be even higher.

--CNN's Kevin Conlon contributed to this report

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