

Santa Clara supervisors insist companies doing business with county pay workers \$19.06 an hour

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SAN JOSE -- Anyone hoping to do business with the county of Santa Clara better be prepared to pay their employees at least \$19.06 an hour.

That's the will of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors that passed a draft Tuesday of a "Living Wage Ordinance" in an effort to narrow the county's economic gap between the rich and poor.

"Not only will the ordinance raise the standard of living," said Supervisor Dave Cortese, "but reduce the demand for safety net services that the county provides."

The ordinance, proposed by Cortese and Supervisor Ken Yeager, is expected to win final approval at the board's Dec. 16 meeting.

Community-based nonprofits will be exempt until the board meets with those stakeholders and comes up with a plan to include them, the supervisors said.

The Living Wage, which would apply to contracts initiated on or after July 1, will allow employers to contribute up to \$4 of the \$19.06 hourly wage to health coverage or retirement benefits. The ordinance also requires employers to give workers at least one hour of sick leave for every 20 hours worked, up to 12 days a year. Some \$2.5 billion in county contracts will be affected.

"As the primary provider of safety net services," Yeager said, "the county has both a moral and a financial incentive to do what we can to promote fair pay for hard work."

Most county employees are represented by unions, which have bargaining agreements with the county.

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