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San Jose Union, Labor Leaders Want to Accelerate \$15 an Hour Minimum Wage Increase

By [NBC Bay Area staff](#)

Thirteen cities in Santa Clara County want to make sure that workers in California get paid a minimum of \$15 an hour by 2019, three years before the state mandates that amount, and activists are facing off with a divided San Jose city council on whether that pay hike will be accelerated or not. Bob Redell reports. (Published Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2016)

Thirteen cities in Santa Clara County want to make sure that workers in California get paid a minimum of \$15 an hour by 2019, three years before the state mandates that amount, and activists are facing off with a divided San Jose city council on whether that pay hike will be accelerated or not.

Union activists, who are staging a rally in front of San Jose City Hall on Tuesday, say this would be the first region-wide approach to raising the minimum wage in the nation. But the San Jose City Council is divided on whether to accelerate the minimum wage, [the Mercury News reported](#).

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Supporters who want the pay hike accelerated say that if adopted by each city, 250,000 workers would get quicker raises, putting \$800 million more in their pockets each year and boosting the gross domestic product of the nine-county area by \$314 million every year. They cite a report by the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at the University of California, Berkeley to bolster their cause.

Cupertino, Los Altos, and Palo Alto have since voted for \$15 by 2019, and Mountain View and Sunnyvale will enact the wage hike as early as 2018.

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On Tuesday, San Jose leaders will decide how they're going to approach the issue.

“As the largest city in the county, this is a key vote that other cities are watching closely,” union activist Maria Noel Fernandez said. She is backed by groups such as Latinos United for a New America, Sacred Heart Community Service, Café J, Working Partnerships USA, South Bay Labor Council, Fight for \$15/Union, Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition, Raise the Wage Coalition, SEIU-USWW, and SEIU 521.

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According to the [Mercury News](#), Mayor Sam Liccardo, Vice Mayor Rose Herrera and Councilmen Chappie Jones and Manh Nguyen propose raising the city's wage floor to \$15 by July 1, 2019.

But council members Magdalena Carrasco, Raul Peralez, Ash Kalra and Donald Rocha want to see it raised six months earlier — on January 1, 2019.

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In addition to the conflict on the council, the [Mercury News](#) reported that city staff wants something else. Kim Walesh, San Jose's economic development director, suggested raising the minimum wage to \$15 by January 2020 — one year later than the Cities Association recommendation but two years ahead of a state mandate to reach \$15 by 2022.

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