

Santa Clara County Sets Progressive Living Wage Standards

by *The Left Hook*

Santa Clara County Supervisors have taken the bold step toward establishing the most comprehensive living wage law in the nation. At the board meeting Tuesday morning, Supervisors voted 3 to 1 (yea: Chavez, Cortese, Yeager; nay: Wasserman; Supervisor Joe Simitian abstained) on the substance of a law that will require county contractors to pay their employees a living wage, in most instances in this area is between \$17 and \$19 an hour, in addition to requiring several other measures to make it easier for lower wage workers to make ends meet in Silicon Valley.



There are more than 140 jurisdictions around the U.S. that have Living Wage laws, and Santa Clara County took the best elements of those laws and combined them to make up the new ordinance. The policy includes wages that will allow working families to sustain themselves, access to fair benefits and health care coverage, access to paid sick leave, more hours for part time workers and flexible hours to allow employees a work/life balance. The law's provisions also include a voice at work, protecting employees who complain about a problem employer from retaliation.

"This is a monumental win for working families in Silicon Valley," said Ben Field, Executive Officer of the South Bay Labor Council, who partnered with Working Partnerships USA and SEIU Local 521 to advocate for the law.

Derecka Mehrens, Executive Director of WPUSA said: "The County does billions of dollars worth of business with contractors and those employers have a responsibility to provide good quality jobs for their workers because it reflects on the County."

There are still some details to be worked out concerning how the policy will be carried out. Supervisors will take a formal vote December 19th on the substance of the law that was approved today.