



Bill would raise minimum wage for 18 and younger House OKs measure; Senate is next

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Working teenagers would get a pay raise if the Illinois legislature and governor agree to increase the minimum wage for anyone age 18 and younger.

Proposed legislation would hike the minimum wage for minors, which is 50 cents less than what people older than 18 are paid. The current minimum wage for adults is \$7.50 per hour. By 2010, that will go up to \$8.25 per hour.

"It's not fair to be offered less money for the same work an adult does," said Kelcee Walsh, a 16-year-old from Springfield.

Walsh said the increase would help especially because teenagers are struggling with rising gas prices.

"With the increase, you would be able to get to your job and have a little spending money," she said.

House Bill 5141 passed out of the House last week on a 62-51 vote. It now advances to the Senate.

Rep. John Fritchey, a Chicago Democrat and sponsor of the bill, said if a teenager is "capable, willing and able to perform the task," he or she deserves appropriate compensation.

"If a business can get by paying less, they are going to do it," Fritchey said. "There is an inherent inequity."

But Rep. Ron Stephens, R-Greenville, said raising the wage for teenagers does nothing but raise expectations without changing reality.

"We should be telling them to stay in school," Stephens said. "Grab hold of the lowest rung of the ladder and start climbing."

Rep. Lou Lang, D-Skokie, said paying adults and teenagers the same is the fair thing to do.

"We must try to create laws that reflect what is right," said Lang. "People that do the same work ought to be paid the same salary."

But Rep. Dennis Reboletti, R-Addison, said businesses would choose to hire adults instead of teenagers if they have to pay them both the same amount.

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