

---

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2009

# Idaho boosting minimum wage

**By Betsy Z. Russell**

betsyr@spokesman.com, (866) 336-2854

## Hike is third portion of federal increase

BOISE – Idaho's minimum-wage earners will see their first increase in buying power since 1997 when the state's minimum wage jumps to \$7.25 an hour on July 24.

It's the third step in a three-step increase in the federal minimum wage, which Idaho matches – unlike Washington, whose state minimum wage is \$8.55 an hour.

Idaho's is just \$6.55. Before Congress approved the three-phase increase in 2007, Idaho's minimum wage had been \$5.15 an hour since 1997.

Idaho Department of Labor spokesman Bob Fick said the three-year boost “has combined with the dampening effect of the national recession to actually give minimum wage workers a boost in buying power for the first time in over a decade.”

The \$5.15 an hour that Idaho set for minimum-wage earners in 1997, with inflation, would be equal to \$7.05 today. That means the bump up to \$7.25, unlike the two earlier boosts, will bring the buying power of Idaho's minimum wage above the 1997 level.

About 40,000 Idaho workers will be affected by the July 24 pay hike, twice as many as were affected by the two earlier ones, to \$5.85 in 2007 and to \$6.55 in 2008. Forty percent of the affected workers are employed in food service or retail sales, Fick said.

Idaho sets a lower minimum for tipped employees, at \$3.35 an hour, although employers must make up the difference if tips don't bring those workers up to the minimum. That won't change.

---

PUBLISHED: JULY 11, 2009, MIDNIGHT

Tags: minimum wage

---

[Click here to comment on this story »](#)

---

---

© Copyright 2016, The Spokesman-Review