



A Continuing Legislative Trend – Seattle Approves Legislation Raising the Minimum Wage to \$15.00 an Hour

Insights

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As previously discussed on this blog, in recent months many state and local governments have aggressively moved to raise the minimum wage. The City of Seattle joined these ranks on Monday when its city council unanimously approved an ordinance raising the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour, the highest for any metropolis in the country. The minimum wage increase in Seattle will be phased over differing lengths of time depending on the size and type of the employer. For employers with less than 500 employees the minimum wage increase will be phased in over the next seven years, while for larger businesses and franchises the increase will be phased in over the next three years; for those businesses and franchises falling into the latter group that also offer health insurance this phasing in process will be extended to four years. The ordinance also includes an exception that allows employers to pay a lower training wage to teenagers.

The action taken by Seattle on Monday demonstrates a growing legislative trend across the country, namely states and municipalities moving to raise the minimum wage in the absence of federal action in this area. Four major cities in California alone, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and Oakland, are all currently considering pieces of legislation that would raise the minimum wage for all or at least a large portion of individuals working in the city. The end result is an evolving and ever changing patchwork of minimum wage laws that employers must deal with on a daily basis. The trajectory in many parts of the country is moving in favor of raising the minimum wage, meaning employers should anticipate further legislative activity in this arena in the coming weeks and months.