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The ‘Raise the Wage’ Coalition in Los Angeles: Framing Opportunity Against Corporate Power

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Introduction

The Los Angeles “Raise the Wage” campaign is a coalition of workers’ centers, unions, and community groups who sought the passage of local proposals to raise the minimum wage and establish labor enforcement agencies. Originally, the coalition constituted two broad labor campaigns. The first campaign began in 2009 with workers’ centers and unions representing workers in the carwash, garment, day labor, and restaurant/ food service industries organizing the Los Angeles Coalition to Against Wage Theft. The second campaign, meanwhile, attempted to increase the minimum wage and was loosely constituted by workers’ organizations representing custodial, grocery, airport, fast food, hotel, and retail workers. In Los Angeles, employers steal approximately \$26 million a week (approximately \$1,352 million a year) from workers. Although eight out of ten low wage workers experience some form of wage-theft, more than half of garment workers and approximately a third of custodial and retail workers report being paid less than legal minimum wage. However, wage-theft claims are very difficult to make, and, only a minority of the cases that win wage-theft claims against their employers (approximately 17%) receive any payment toward their settlements.

In September 2014, Mayor Garcetti launched a campaign to increase the minimum wage to \$13.25 by 2017 and commissioned a study by UC Berkley to explore the potential impacts of increasing the minimum wage. Although these campaigns had overlapping networks (e.g. community organizations, unions and workers’ centers, organizers, etc.) that supported each other, the agenda set by the Mayor provided the political opportunity to integrate and consolidate these campaigns into a single coalition. The coalition advocated for raising the proposed \$13.25 minimum wage to \$15.25 by 2020 and establishing an agency dedicated to enforcement in addition to fixing the new minimum wage to an index reflecting changes in the costs of living and guaranteeing sick days.

The most vocal opponents of these proposals were business owners in real estate and food service industries with tipped workforces. Restaurant owners against a higher minimum wage advocated that Los Angeles adopt a sub-minimum wage for tipped workers as lobbied nationally by the National Restaurant Association (NRA) who represent corporate restaurant chains. for the existence of highly exploitative, unlawful labor practices that target contingency work (e.g. day laborers).

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Although many of these critics portray themselves as “small business owners” at the city and county hearings, many of them employ larger workforces than the majority of firms operating in the United States.

The “Raise the Wage” coalition focused on community education, student outreach, and lobby actions because of the Mayor's commitment to raise the minimum wage. Student and community outreach centered on educating the public regarding issues of wage-theft, sexual harassment, discrimination, and the economic hardships of living in Los Angeles while earning the current minimum wage. Educational events generally revolved around workers’ panels where workers from different industries speak about their experiences in the workplace and explicitly link the need to increase the minimum wage with the necessity of ending wage-theft. For example, on March 25th, the Delores Huerta Labor Institute and Restaurant Opportunities Center hosted an event at Los Angeles Valley College that was sponsored by the Associated Students and attended by approximately 50 students. The four-person panel spoke at length about the city’s wage-theft crisis and the minimum wage’s failure to keep up with the rising cost of living in Los Angeles. Three workers on the panel gave accounts about personally experiencing wage-theft in a variety of ways that included being denied overtime pay for overtime hours, being forced to work through legally mandated breaks, and having management partially seize tips intended for workers. Moreover, on April 3rd, the panelist organized a delegation to city council to distribute a petition supporting the proposal to increase the minimum wage and establish a local labor enforcement agency.

On June 10th 2015, the Los Angeles City Council passed a resolution to increase the minimum wage in the city to \$15.25 by 2020 and to create a local labor enforcement agency to protect workers against *wage-theft*.¹ During the Los Angeles city council hearings, critics made different arguments that selectively attacked either a higher minimum wage or a labor enforcement agency to separate the provisions and defeat the overall proposal. The employers’ counter-mobilization explicitly aimed to protect employers’ profits by sustaining highly exploitative and unlawful labor practices that impoverish workers. However, despite the claims of employers, on July 21st, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also voted to draft a similar proposal to increase the county minimum wage and establish a county-level enforcement agency. This policy brief examines the frames used by critics of the proposal for a \$15.25 minimum wage with enforcement to better conceptualize possible responses to the employer counter-mobilization. It also studies the coalition’s future work and offers strategies that may be useful to similar campaigns across the country.

CRITICS OF THE MINIMUM WAGE ORDINANCES

The Los Angeles City Council commissioned reports by the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Roundtable to study the potential impacts of increasing the minimum wage to \$15.25 an hour. While the Chamber of Commerce report emphasized a higher minimum wage would create fewer new jobs, the Economic Roundtable report agreed with the initial UC Berkley study that an increased minimum wage would produce an economic stimulus that would benefit the city of Los Angeles and surrounding, unincorporated areas. The LA City Council subsequently held district hearings in Watts, Van Nuys, and West LA encouraging the public to voice their perspectives on increasing the minimum wage, providing

paid sick leave, and local enforcement of these and other labor laws. The proceedings were overwhelmingly dominated by an extended discussion concerning tipped work in the restaurant industry. Most critics identified themselves as self-made entrepreneurs with work experience in the industry. At the minimum wage hearing in Watts this meritocracy frame, was largely absent, but was prominent at the later hearing in West L.A. Nonetheless, critics of the minimum wage proposal advanced a narrative about the negative impact of the ordinance on small business.

Arguments Against Minimum Wage. Critics of the proposed \$15.25 minimum wage represented business interests in industries with significant portions of their workforce receiving tips. The local business interests who were critical of the proposal made two arguments against the proposal. After identifying themselves as small business owners, they claimed increasing the minimum wage to \$15.25 an hour for their tipped workforce would ultimately lead to job loss in Los Angeles since they would be forced to reduce the number of employees to cover the higher costs of labor. The most adamant critics further claimed the potential for job loss would be high because they owned or managed several locations that collectively employ between 30 and 300 workers and the new minimum wage could lead to the closure of one or more of their establishments. However, rather than directly oppose the \$15.25 minimum wage proposal; these critics advocated the adoption of industrial exemptions for tipped workers. The exemption would allow employers to pay a wage below the minimum wage by counting tips toward the fulfillment of worker’s \$15.25 an hour wage. The workers’ wages would subsequently be calculated using workers’ *expected* tips—meaning employers would only pay the full \$15.25 wage if the *actual* amount of tips workers received does not supplement the sub-minimum wage enough to fulfill the mandated \$15.25 an hour wage.

Secondly, local business interests also identified capital flight as a problem in both the public hearings and the Chamber of Commerce report. The argument states that, because approximately 40% of businesses in the city of Los Angeles are located two miles from the city’s boundary, businesses will move outside of Los Angeles to circumvent the higher minimum wage.ⁱⁱ They argue that, if workers stay with the firm, they will need to pay for increased transportation costs due to longer work commutes. The alternative, they further argue, would force workers to quit their current job in the hopes of finding comparable employment closer to home. Unemployment in Los Angeles may increase even though the jobs still exist, albeit outside of the city limits. Moreover, workers who become unemployed and reemployed would experience economic losses due to lower relative wages and debt accumulated during unemployment.

Arguments Against an Enforcement Agency. Critics of the wage-theft provisions seeking to establish an enforcement agency were present in the May 6th city council hearings at the Los Angeles City Hall. Opponents of labor enforcement principally represented real estate interests. Their arguments centered on the claim that the creation of an agency for labor enforcement may unfairly punish “good” business owners who follow the law by having them pay for the founding of an agency that is intended to curb the unlawful labor practices of “bad” business owners. According to this argument, “good” businesses follow the law and have responsible labor practices. They are not responsible for the criminal labor

practices of “bad” businesses and should not be expected to assume responsibility (i.e. fund the creation of a labor enforcement agency) for making other firms follow the law and act responsibly.

They also argued that the collection and enforcement strategies of the labor agency may further victimize “good” business owners. Since the agency may be given the power to put liens on property, business owners in real estate who hire development or construction companies with bad labor practices (e.g. wage-theft) may have their property seized and their investments endangered. Moreover, critics also argued that the existence of the agency would prompt workers to abuse it by filing false or fraudulent claims. Subsequently, the argument may be made that these proceedings may hold “good” business owners who are wrongfully accused hostage and force them to settle out of court to avoid mounting court fees and damages. In the case of appealing a ruling made against a “good” business, the enforcement agency may further impede justice by discouraging appeals due to liens accrued from non-payment of settlements. Ultimately, the fundamental core of critics’ arguments against labor enforcement is that it is unfair to “good” businesses to have them assume responsibility for the criminality of “bad” businesses and, in taking responsibility, further open themselves up to being victimized.

DEBUNKING THE “SMALL BUSINESS” FRAMES & ARGUMENTS

The small business framing used by critics presented opportunities for the “Raise the Wage” campaign to successfully push for minimum wage reform because of the corporate interests supporting these critics. For example, the Chamber of Commerce—one of the first and longest-standing social movement organizations representing employers in the United States—was present at the Los Angeles City Hall hearings and vocally opposed both the \$15.25 an hour minimum wage and the creation of a local labor enforcement agency. This connection to the corporate community becomes more evident after an analysis of critics’ frames. Moreover, the counter-proposals advanced by critics reflected the policy models of major corporate associations.

The Ambiguity of “Small Business”. Opponents of the proposal strategically deployed a “small business” frame to misrepresent owners’ position in the economy and obscure the power relation between them and their workers, allowing them to rhetorically and symbolically appeal to moral authority by presenting themselves as victims. This “small business” frame is a counter-mobilizing frame meant to diminish the impact of workers’ arguments regarding wage-theft and the hardships of living on the current minimum wage. At its core, the frame intentionally exploits ambiguity over the definition of “small business”. At the institutional level, there is no universal standard for categorizing an enterprise as a small business. Whereas small businesses in Australia are defined as firms employing 15 workers or less,ⁱⁱⁱ standards in the United States may categorize firms with up to 500 workers as small businesses.^{iv}

The United States’ Small Business Administration (SBA), which helps small businesses gain access to government contracts and tax credits, sets different criteria for “small businesses” that vary by industry. The previously mentioned small business qualification of 500 workers is used for manufacturing firms, including canning, meat-packing, apparel/ garment and pharmaceuticals. For full-service restaurants

(including diners, bars, and nightclubs), the SBA bases the size of the business on its annual revenues/receipts rather than a count of employees. A full-service restaurant qualifies as a small business if it reports \$7.5 million or less in annual revenue according to SBA standards.^v

Organizational studies looking at firm size have a less variable standard. Examining firm sizes using U.S. census data, organizational scholars have found that the overwhelming majority of firms in the U.S. have fewer than 10 employees. Although the mean firm size is 21, the median number of workers employed by a firm is between 3 and 4 employees.^{vi} Based this definition, many of the critics who claimed to be small business owners do not own small businesses. Some of the critics who presented themselves as small business owners spoke about employing over 30 workers. In fact, their argument about significant job loss with the passage of minimum wage ordinances fundamentally requires that they have medium-sized workforces and contradicts their claims of being small business owners.

Small Business & Corporate Interests. The tipped worker exemption advanced by critics reflected the business model that corporate restaurant chains (e.g. Darden, who own Olive Garden, and DineEquity, who are the parent company of IHOP) have lobbied and successfully instituted in 43 states through the National Restaurant Association (NRA).^{vii} The exemption fundamentally establishes a *sub-minimum* wage rate for tipped workers and radically redefines the concept of “wage” to include tips. Tips can not be counted toward the wage since clients have no contractual obligation to the worker. The critics’ advocacy for a sub-minimum wage is dependent on the use of “small business” frames. It is commonly understood that small businesses do not make the same profits as larger firms. By using the small business frame, critics who represent medium and large business interests can avoid discussions of profits or access to capital and instead link rising labor costs to higher menu prices and imminent loss in revenue and layoffs.

In fact, the purpose of the sub-minimum wage exemption exists to increase profit margins at the direct expense of workers. The sub-minimum wage model these critics advocated for are largely responsible for the massive profit margins of corporate restaurant chains (e.g. in 2014, Darden reported \$286 million in profits while DineEquity reported \$36 million).^{viii} However, this model has permitted corporate restaurants to extensively profit from the poverty of their workers. The sub-minimum wage for tipped workers in 20 states is \$2.13 while 22 other states established a sub-minimum wage of \$5.00 an hour, meaning that a significant portion of tipped workers must rely on public assistance programs. The estimated cost of providing the families of full-service restaurant worker with public assistance is \$9.4 billion a year.^{ix}

In Los Angeles, tipped employees in full-service restaurants only account for 44% of all tipped workers.^x The remaining 56% of tipped workers are employed in the carwash, hospitality, massage, and beauty industries. The increase in poverty among working people caused by the sub-minimum wage and subsequent costs in public assistance to Los Angeles will be much more far-reaching than a comparative analysis of tipped restaurant workers outside of California would produce since the majority of tipped workers are not employed in the restaurant industry. Additionally, since approximately 63% of all tipped workers in Los Angeles are women,^{xi} a sub-minimum wage for tipped workers directly harms the

economic status of working women.

Outsourcing Labor & Liability. Critics' arguments against the founding of an enforcement agency reflect the long-standing strategies of large firms, especially big retailers such as Walmart.^{xii} Large and heavily financialized firms use outsourcing or sub-contracting to externalize labor costs and liability (i.e. legal responsibility) by hiring third party firms for production and distribution. As a result, third party firms compete with each other over these jobs by dropping their prices through lowering labor costs while keeping workers' productivity high. This organizational practice has led to the proliferation of sweatshop conditions and wage-theft in Los Angeles' residential and commercial construction industries following the anti-worker deregulation of the 1980's.^{xiii} Although businesses that rely on outsourced labor directly cause the conditions that lead to highly exploitative and unlawful labor practices, they avoid any legal responsibility for these disreputable labor practices despite benefitting the most from them. An enforcement agency would force these employers to take responsibility for unfair labor practices. Critics seek to maintain the existing organization of production by using frames on the *hypothetical* victimization of business owners.

The frame that an enforcement agency unfairly punishes "good" businesses contradicts the reality of illegal labor practices of third party firms. "Good" businesses that follow the law are already being punished because of the criminal labor practices of "bad" businesses. If "bad" businesses utilize unlawful labor practices to keep them from failing, then they already have an unfair competitive advantage over "good" businesses. In fact, small businesses that follow the law are the most adversely affected from being forced to compete against firms that use criminal labor practices. Combined with the lack of an effective means to negatively sanction unlawful behavior, the competitive pressures that law-abiding, small businesses face from "bad" firms actually incentivizes their adoption of criminal labor practices to remain competitive. As it stands, *not* having an enforcement agency punishes "good" employers since there is no effective deterrent for unlawful labor practices.

A local labor agency with the power to carry out enforcement would strongly discourage wage-theft and other unlawful labor practices. As a result, "good" businesses—especially small businesses—should actively pursue a strong enforcement agency with a high capacity to process cases quickly and circumvent "bad" firm's strategies to avoid restitution (e.g. declaring bankruptcy and reforming as a new firm). Any start-up costs associated with the creation of the enforcement agency would be outweighed by the long-term economic benefits associated with eliminating "good" firms' competitive disadvantage. The future costs of maintaining the enforcement agency, moreover, would be paid by the "bad" businesses who are successfully prosecuted for their unlawful labor practices through additional fines.

FUTURE WORK

The passing of the proposed ordinance to gradually increase the minimum wage to \$15.25 by 2020 and to establish a labor enforcement agency was an important victory of the 'Raise the Wage' coalition in Los Angeles. On July 21st, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to draft a proposal that would similarly raise the county minimum wage and provide labor enforcement. Popular discourse

on these victories emphasizes the increased minimum wage and how it may lift the standard of living for low-income workers. However, this analysis overstates the significance of the minimum wage portion of the proposal. Los Angeles is one of the most unaffordable cities to live in the country because of high housing costs. For example, to rent a 2 bedroom home in the Los Angeles-Long Beach area, someone working a 40 hour week would need to earn approximately \$27 an hour. If the worker is only making the current nine dollar an hour minimum wage, they would need to work 122 hours a week^{xiv}— about 17.5 hours a day with no weekends. By the time the \$15.25 an hour minimum wage takes effect *in 2020*, it is still \$12 less than what it would take to afford a 2 bedroom home *in 2015*. Nonetheless, the new \$15 minimum wage guarantees that today's working poor will have a place in tomorrow's Los Angeles.

The provisions to establish labor enforcement and protect workers from wage-theft have a greater potential for empowering workers than the minimum wage provisions. The commitment to establish a labor enforcement agency provides a legal venue for individual workers to challenge employers' power at the point of production while creating the infrastructure for workers to collectively challenge hierarchies in the local division of labor. The new minimum wage's potential to lessen low-income workers' hardships in Los Angeles is completely dependent on workers' capacity to collect their wages from employers. Although the state committed to labor enforcement on paper, it must commit the necessary resources (e.g., funding, legal authority, and personnel) toward its implementation. Accordingly, the 'Raise the Wage' coalition needs to continue advocating for the successful implementation of a strong labor enforcement agency to combat wage-theft.

Enforcement capacity. Future work will seek to develop a local labor agency that has the capacity to aggressively enforce labor law. Securing and developing the agency's organizational capacity to negatively sanction offending employers is paramount because only prompted 17% of employers who are found guilty of wage theft have paid restitution. This will require a provision that classifies wage-theft as a crime. The classification of wage-theft as a misdemeanor would allow the agency to enforce settlements through the suspension of business licenses and the levying of fines and liens against guilty employers.

Another issue with enforcement is employers often intimidate and retaliate against workers who pursue wage-theft claims against them. While employers' intimidation may include a variety of threats against a person's livelihood, more serious cases have included threats to call the police/ ICE on immigrant workers (i.e., a threat of deportation). Similarly, employers' past retaliation against workers who filed wage-theft claims includes reducing their hours, changing their work schedules, termination, countersuits, and calls to the police. Retaliation against workers who file claims also serves as intimidation against other workers who may have suffered wage-theft or experienced other labor violations. The enforcement agency's capacity to *immediately* sanction employers who attempt to intimidate or retaliate against workers who file wage-theft claims is necessary to ensure workers are not deterred from filing.

Regulatory Integration. The state must commit the resources to build a strong enforcement agency and

develop the investigative functions necessary to implement labor law. Workers' centers are already at the forefront of bringing legal claims of wage-theft to arbitration by helping workers collect evidence (e.g., documentation of hours worked and wages withheld) and providing workers with legal services. As a result, worker centers informally perform the investigatory functions of existing wage-theft enforcement proceedings. Moreover, organizers from workers' centers and unions have unique skills that can inform the creation of investigation units. The enforcement agency could develop an investigative unit that includes workers' centers and unions by empowering them to inspect and observe the labor practices of a particular employer or a local industry (e.g., day-labor, garment, custodial service, trucking, etc.).

The coalition should work toward formally integrating workers' center into the new labor enforcement agency to ensure it is successfully implemented and autonomous from business interests. Community partnerships between local labor organizations and government agencies in combating wage-theft and anti-retaliation enforcement may provide workers' centers with increased resources to expand its work and services to workers. However, this cooperation should only be viewed as a means for formally integrating the labor organizations directly into the state's local regulatory infrastructure. For example, unions in welfare-states form part of the infrastructure for the disbursement of unemployment and public assistance.^{xv} This regulatory integration must aggressively seek to transform the agency into an institution that protects and advances all workers' interests to prevent capital's inevitable attempt to blunt or repurpose the agency's enforcement capacities in the near future.

Expanded Scope of Enforcement. Integrating the labor organizations into the local regulatory infrastructure, may be expand the scope of the labor agency to investigate, prosecute, and enforce other labor violations, such as claims of sexual harassment and discriminatory hiring/ firing practices. Since two-thirds of workers who earn minimum wage are women^{xvi} and approximately 83% of minimum wage employees are workers of color,^{xvii} the original purpose of raising the minimum wage was to help workers who are struggling because of Los Angeles' low-wages, wage-theft, and high costs of living. This requires paying attention to racial and gendered inequality stemming from labor market conditions (e.g., unequal wages for the same work, lack of access to stable employment, lack of childcare, industrial segmentation, etc.).^{xviii} Expanding the scope of enforcement is in line with the original intent of the proposal and ultimately necessary for addressing the growing inequality in Los Angeles.

Issues of racial and gendered inequality already play an important part in student outreach. Expanding the scope of enforcement in this fashion will allow for greater integration of student and community groups into the Raise the Wage coalition. This may, in turn, facilitate local mobilizations to settle local grievances regarding wage-theft, discrimination, or sexual harassment while the enforcement agency is formalized and staffed. Once such an agency is established, student and community organizers can be recruited and trained to staff the agency or auxiliary organizations (e.g., workers' centers or unions) that can file claims on behalf of workers.

Student outreach. Student outreach may play a prominent role in expanding and strengthening the

infrastructure created by the 'Raise the Wage' coalition. Student outreach is pivotal in establishing a powerful and aggressive enforcement agency since the city's allocation of resources toward implementation remains ambiguous. Increased student outreach would allow for community mobilizations around local grievances (e.g., wage-theft or discrimination) while the enforcement agency is formalized and staffed. Providing under-resourced workers' centers with volunteers to help organize these mobilizations and potentially resolve these claims in spite of a weak enforcement agency and student-organizers may be trained to help build and expedite wage-theft or anti-discriminatory cases. These student-organizers may also provide a means of demanding resources from local government through grants or community partnerships to develop implementation in the nascent enforcement agency.

This latter opportunity is important since the enforcement agency, both at its inception and with its expansion, will require a specialized staff. The coalition could advocate the hiring of these student-organizers to staff specialized departments within the enforcement agency due to their fieldwork, expertise in particular industries, connections with workers' centers, and knowledge of workers' hardships. In doing so, the coalition will strengthen its networks across the labor movement and regulatory agencies in a way that helps buffer against the aforementioned assimilation of the enforcement agency or coalition into anti-worker, pro-business agendas.

LESSONS FROM LOS ANGELES CAMPAIGN

Several political opportunities may become available to organizers involved in similar struggles across the country. The saliency of the \$15 minimum wage frame can not be understated. The 'Raise the Wage' coalition was able to address wage-theft and labor enforcement in Los Angeles because of the frame's salience in public discourse. Additionally, student outreach provides a means to establish a multi-city or cross-county infrastructure that could promote stronger organizational ties to push for a higher minimum wage and enforcement agency at a county or state-level. Establishing and publicly promoting an empirically-based definition of "small business" will undermine the "small business" frame. Moreover, an empirically-based definition would provide a basis to model the implementation of a new minimum wage ordinance that more accurately distinguishes "small businesses" from owners of multiple establishments or franchise firms with corporate ties that siphon resources out of working-class communities.

The Fifteen Dollar Frame. The \$15 minimum wage in Los Angeles is at best a starting point for resolving the city's growing inequality and crisis of affordability. The wage-theft coalition began its organizational efforts approximately 6 years ago and encountered resistance toward any implementation of an enforcement policy. However, the frame's accessibility allowed the coalition to go beyond the Mayor's proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$13 and to introduce provisions to establish an enforcement agency. Although the enforcement provision constitutes a more significant victory, the city's elected officials would have most likely continued to ignore the city's wage-theft crisis without the \$15 minimum wage frame's capacity to make the crisis of wage-theft salient in public discourse.

Other cities and states engaged in the fight to raise the minimum wage should use the \$15 minimum wage frame's flexibility to address long-standing labor issues. Increasing the scope of the campaign will also broaden a coalition's base and increase its organizational capacities while working toward the passage of an ordinance addressing multiple labor concerns. For example, in Los Angeles, the LA Black Worker Center raised concerns about a black job crisis stemming from the discriminatory exclusion of black workers from well-paying, stable industries (e.g., construction). Discriminatory labor practices that produce segmented and split labor markets may be framed as an enforcement issue that does not aid poverty among workers who face chronic unemployment and underemployment due to race or gender. While the Los Angeles enforcement agency may eventually review issues of equal opportunity employment, the labor movement in other cities may have the opportunity to more directly and effectively include them under the purview of a new ordinance for a higher minimum wage with enforcement. The malleability of the frame, coupled with its saliency, gives the labor movement the opportunity to win greater local victories than just a new minimum wage.

Student Outreach and Capital Flight. Critics of the \$15 minimum wage, supported by the LA Chamber of Commerce study, argued that the close proximity of businesses to the city limits would prompt them to relocate to avoid the added labor cost. The Economic Roundtable argued the opposite; it argued that communities in the surrounding areas will face pressure to raise their wages because workers in these areas will search for employment in Los Angeles to earn a higher wage. Although LA County passed a similar minimum wage and enforcement proposal shortly after the passage of the LA City Council's proposal, it took long-term coordination among various labor campaigns to create the political context that led to the Los Angeles City Council's proposal for a new minimum wage. Therefore, the successful passage of additional county proposals would depend on the ability of the coalition to mobilize in surrounding areas.

The opportunity for similar 'Raise the Wage coalitions' to strengthen and grow regional networks exists and needs to be exploited. Student outreach in university and college campuses would be an extremely effective way to grow the coalition's infrastructure and promote the 'Raise the Wage' campaign outside of the city or county. Student-workers would be particularly effective at bridging economic and social networks (on and off campus) that are otherwise difficult to connect. A more strategic approach would directly target areas that are central to the economic processes of surrounding communities and most likely to serve as the sites to which critics may threaten relocation if a new minimum wage is passed. Such targeted strategies will preempt and nullify claims about capital flight at the same time that it builds the infrastructure necessary to seek county-level or state-level ordinances.

Re-Classifying Small Business. Corporate lobbies often work through small businesses to create the local conditions necessary to maximize profits. Institutionalizing an empirical definition for "small business" in a new minimum wage and/or enforcement ordinance may create a political cleavage between small businesses and large corporate firms that would aid future labor campaigns. Existing organizational studies can serve as the basis for this definition. The coalition should focus on publicly revealing the corporate ties that many self-proclaimed small businesses have through franchising or over-lapping

networks (i.e., participation in the Chamber of Commerce). Student outreach would especially benefit from this approach given the anti-corporation sentiments of students in a post-Occupy Wall Street climate on university and college campuses. Introducing a “small business” definition into these provisions would allow for nuanced policies that could effectively challenge the influence of corporate lobbies at the point of production.

Endnotes

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