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Florida rings in New Year with minimum wage increase

(OCALA, Fla.) – Florida is among eight states with minimum wage rates set to increase on Jan. 1, 2012. Starting Sunday, the Florida minimum wage will be \$7.67 per hour, up from \$7.31.

Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2004 which created the state's minimum wage and requires it to keep pace with inflation. When first introduced in May 2005, Florida's minimum wage was \$6.15, topping what was then the federal wage of \$5.15. Since then, the state's minimum wage has been raised seven times while the federal rate, currently \$7.25 an hour, has increased three times.

By law, Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) calculates the state's minimum wage based on fluctuations in the consumer price index for the southern region.

Florida's minimum wage applies to all employees in the state who are covered by the federal minimum wage. By law, workers are entitled to the higher rate if the state's minimum wage exceeds the federal level, which was last adjusted in 2009.

Also effective Jan. 1, employers of "tipped" employees may count tips actually received as wages, provided they pay tipped employees a direct hourly wage of \$4.65.

The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempts certain jobs from both state and federal minimum wage law, including farm and seasonal workers, those who deliver newspapers and other "informal" workers, such as babysitters.

Twenty-three United States territories and states in 2011 had minimum wages set at the federal level; the lowest minimum wage was Puerto Rico's at \$4.10 an hour, while Georgia and Wyoming both had minimum wages of \$5.15. The highest minimum wages were \$8.67 in Washington and \$8.50 in Oregon. Five states had no state minimum wage.

In addition to Florida, states raising minimum wages effective New Year's day are Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont and Washington. Increases range from 28-37 cents an hour; Washington continues to lead the nation with a minimum wage in 2012 of \$9.04 – the first state or territory to top \$9 per hour – followed by Oregon with \$8.80.

San Francisco, one of the few cities that sets its own minimum wage above the federal level, will raise its rate to \$10.24 per hour, becoming the first big city to require an hourly wage rate of at least \$10.

Florida's minimum wage poster is available for downloading in English and Spanish from DEO at www.clmworkforce.com or at <http://floridajobs.org>. The DEO website also provides links to posters and other information required by the U.S. Department of Labor.

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