

Democrats reintroduce legislation to end tipped minimum wage in WI

Written by Francesca Yunjung Hong Press

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MADISON - As the federal government moves toward an increase of the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, Wisconsin remains at a paltry \$7.25. Tipped workers, on the other hand, must make do with \$2.13 or \$2.33 per hour, depending on age and length of employment. Today, Senator Chris Larson and Representative Francesca Hong reintroduced legislation that would end this discrepancy, ensuring that tipped employees are subject to the same minimum wage as the rest of the workforce.

Senator Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee), whose district includes a large number of tipped service establishments, released the following statement about the bill:



“We saw during the pandemic how much tipped workers can suffer in times of economic uncertainty. As some of the last hired, first fired members of the labor pool, they need the predictability of a regular paycheck, not the stress and insecurity of relying on strangers’ generosity to pay their bills. The sub-minimum wage is a relic of slavery and Jim Crow, and it deserves to meet the same fate.”

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Representative Francesca Hong (D-Madison), herself a restaurant owner, had this to say:



“Fair wages empower workers and cultivate a more equitable society. Eliminating the tipped minimum wage is a step towards economic justice and a stride towards dignity and stability in the workplace. Wisconsin workers deserve dependable income, irrespective of tips.

Let's build an economy where every job is valued, every worker is respected, and every paycheck reflects the true worth of their labor.”

At a press event this morning, Sen. Larson and Rep. Hong were joined by:

Kessa Albright (Bartender/Server)

Rebecca Meier-Rao (Executive Director - Worker Justice Wisconsin)

Liliana Barrera (Policy & Engagement Coordinator - Kid's Forward)

Evan Danells (Executive Chef/Owner - Cadre Restaurant)

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Background on our tipped workforce:

Employees on a tipped minimum wage often experience significant financial instability. Not only are tipped workers nearly twice as likely to live in poverty as non-tipped workers, but they also rarely receive benefits like vacation, retirement benefits or paid sick leave ([EPI](#)). It is therefore imperative that we provide a steady and fair base wage in order to help workers in tipped industries work towards greater economic stability and upward mobility.

Republicans argue eliminating the tipped minimum wage would limit the choices of tipped workers and their employers, however, the opposite is true. In addition to creating more financially stable lifestyles for a whole class of individuals and families, paying all workers one fair wage will quickly put more money back into local economies in the form of spending. Businesses will see less employee turnover due to the greater financial security afforded to their workers, meaning they will not have to spend nearly as much on the costly hiring and training process and, in turn, will have better productivity and performance from a more seasoned and experienced staff ([CAP](#)).

Maintaining the status quo will mean that hardworking Wisconsinites will continue to get left behind as tip culture offers no real guarantee that someone will be compensated fairly. The amount of someone's tip is often influenced by factors out of their control, not their level of service. A customer's implicit biases and how attractive they find a server, for example, shape their opinion on the employee. Black servers, on average, are paid less in tips than their white counterparts, and many workers are subjected to sexual harassment as a result of tip culture ([CTExaminer](#)).

Eliminating the tipped minimum wage will not only have positive long-term effects on our workers' financial wellbeing and our state's economy, but it will also create a safer and more equitable workplace.