

N.J. voters strongly support minimum-wage hike, poll shows

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TRENTON — New Jersey voters are ready to bump up the minimum wage by a dollar an hour, with strong support coming from Democrats and Republicans alike, according to a poll released today.

The Rutgers-Eagleton survey found 76 percent of voters favor raising the wage floor from \$7.25 to \$8.25 an hour and installing automatic yearly increases afterward, while 20 percent are opposed.

The question will [be on the ballot in November](#), at the same time New Jerseyans will choose a governor and all 120 state legislators.

The fact is, unless a strong opposition campaign emerges, this amendment is highly likely to pass," said David Redlawsk, the poll director. "Given the economic dislocation of the last four years, large numbers of New Jerseyans have been touched by joblessness and financial challenges. Most seem to think those at the lower end of the ladder deserve a chance to do better."

Raising the minimum wage via constitutional amendment has never been done in New Jersey, but the survey found voters across the political spectrum are comfortable with the idea: it was favored by 97 percent of Democrats, 57 percent of Republicans, and 71 percent of independents.

In January, Gov. Chris Christie vetoed a minimum-wage increase passed by Democrats, offering instead a dollar and hour bump phased in over three years. The Republican governor also rejected the automatic yearly increases, which business groups opposed and which Christie said would "jeopardize the economic recovery we all seek."

In response, state Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver (D-Essex) and state Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) got their chambers to approve the ballot question for November, saying voters should get to settle it.

The Rutgers-Eagleton poll also found strong support for a voter referendum on legalizing same-sex marriage, with 69 percent of respondents saying the question should also be on the ballot this year, and 62 percent saying they would vote to legalize.

Christie vetoed a same-sex marriage bill last year, saying voters should decide that question. Democrats have not pursued a ballot question.

"The evidence is that New Jersey voters would readily add the state to the list of those legalizing marriage equality," Redlawsk said.

The poll of 819 registered voters, with a margin of error of 3.7 percentage points, was conducted from April 3 to 7.

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