

Governor Wagers on Minimum Wages

By Reg P. Wydeven
June 11, 2005

Before I became a lawyer, my previous career was as a supervisor of building maintenance...okay, janitor. My summer job during college was as a custodian in the middle school in Kimberly. Even though I had to scrub out garbage cans, clean toilets and be on 'puke 'n' pee' patrol for the day care center housed in the old kindergarten room (I got paged more often than the doctors on ER), I absolutely loved that job.

I got to learn all kinds of valuable skills that have come in handy now that I own a home. In addition to being able to clean and get gum out of almost anything, I got experience in carpentry, masonry, carpet and tile laying, electrical work, drywalling and plastering, painting, plumbing, groundskeeping, and my specialty, demolition. However, the best part about that job was the people I worked with. On top of working with good friends, my bosses were great and taught me a lot. In fact, one of my bosses was so cool, we called him 'The Iceman.'

One of the aspects of my janitor job that wasn't the greatest was the pay. My first year I got paid about a quarter more than minimum wage, but by my fourth summer it was almost a dollar and a half. I never complained, though, because I really enjoyed working there plus I got to carry a keychain with about 65 keys on it.

Much to the delight of summer janitors all across the Dairy State, Wisconsin passed a law increasing the minimum wage rate effective June 1, 2005. As part of this legislation, local governments within Wisconsin will be prevented from setting minimum wages higher than the state's, resulting in a uniform minimum wage rate.

The prior minimum wage rate of \$5.15 an hour has been increased to \$5.70 an hour for adults. For minors, the minimum wage increased to \$5.30 an hour, up from \$5.15.

Minimum wages for other specialized pay-rate employees have also been increased. Adult workers in the agricultural field got minimum pay rate increases from \$4.05 an hour to \$5.15, while minors' rates were increased from \$3.70 an hour to \$4.25.

If anyone still wants to be a camp counselor after watching the Friday the 13th movies, they will be happy to know they also got raises. For adults that receive room and board, they got a minimum wage increase from \$91 a week to \$129, while minors increased from \$74 a week to \$105. If board is provided, adults' minimum pay was increased to \$164 a week from \$110, with minors now receiving \$133 a week up from \$92. If no room or board is provided, the minimum wage rate for adults was raised from \$140 a week to \$215, while minors' pay was increased from \$123 a week to \$175.

Finally, golf caddies also got a raise. The minimum wage rate for 18 holes is up to \$10.50 from \$5.95 and the rate for 9 holes went from \$3.35 up to \$5.90. Unfortunately, the minimum wage rate for Wisconsin tipped employees did not change.

My dad's summer job in college was as a sanitation engineer for Kimberly...okay, he worked on the garbage truck. His income wasn't great either - he told me he got minimum wage plus all he could eat. When people would ask me how my janitor job was going, I would borrow my dad's reply for his summer job and say, "It's picking up."

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