

Gov. PATAKI VETOES MINIMUM-WAGE HIKE

ALBANY, N.Y. (UPI) — Gov. George Pataki has vetoed a bill that would have raised the minimum wage in the state to \$7.15 by 2007.

Pataki said he supported an increase in the minimum wage — currently \$5.15 per hour — but wanted it to be on the federal level, so as not to put New York businesses at a disadvantage.

Opponents of the measure said the state would lose jobs as employers' expenses climbed. Bill supporters said it would improve the state economy and help families get out of poverty.

The bill was passed in late July by the New York State Legislature by margins — 57-7 in the Senate and 116-19 in the Assembly — that could override Pataki's veto. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, told the *New York Daily News* he would recommend the legislature override the veto Aug. 2 when lawmakers return to Albany.

Dennis Poust, communications director for the New York State Catholic Conference, said the conference was very disappointed and surprised by Pataki's veto.

"We believe that a higher minimum wage is in the best interests of all New Yorkers, but particularly those who have the least," Poust said.

Contains reporting by Jennifer Burke in Rochester.

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