



# BERGEN NEW JERSEY *County*

**For Immediate Release**

**November 21, 2017**

## Bergen County Executive Tedesco Announces a Minimum Wage Increase to \$15 an Hour for Full Time County Workers

(Hackensack)- At a press conference this afternoon, Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco was joined by the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders, union leaders, workers, and advocates as he announced that full time county employees working at least 40 hours per week will earn at least a \$15 per hour minimum wage. This announcement makes Bergen County the first county in New Jersey to adopt a \$15 minimum wage for its full time county workers.

“Good people are essential to good government, and good managers understand that their employees need to be valued. County employees who put in 40 hours or more every week, in service to their friends and neighbors throughout Bergen County, deserve and have earned a \$15 minimum wage. It was important to me that we do this for our workers in time for holidays.”

Approximately 130 workers will be impacted by the move, which was promptly lauded by union leadership and proponents of a statewide \$15 minimum wage.

“In 2017 the Freeholders and County Executive were able to deliver a responsible budget with a tax decrease, and our analysis proves that a \$15 minimum wage is not only something we can afford, but something that will positively affect the County’s economy and still allow us to hold the line on taxes,” said Freeholder Vice Chairman Tom Sullivan. “It is also the right thing to do. Today we are setting the example, not only for governments in Bergen County and New Jersey, but demonstrating this is a great business decision for the private sector as well.”

“As a union, one of our chief concerns is to secure a fair living wage for our membership. By raising our minimum starting salary over 14% from \$27,341 to \$31,200 (\$15 an hour for 40 hour per week employees), we have taken an important step in the right direction,” said Joe Gautier, President of USWU/IUJAT Local #755. “I support the County Executive and Freeholders efforts in making this a countywide policy. No full time worker should live below the poverty line. It is my hope that others follow Bergen County’s lead and make this initiative a priority.”

The move was viewed as a bellwether for the rest of the state, setting the stage for additional action under an incoming Murphy administration.

“Bergen County has chosen to lead the way for the rest of the Garden State and will surely help set the stage for additional action in the gear up for a comprehensive statewide wage increase,” said Analilia Mejia, Director of New Jersey Working Families, which has advocated for a phased-in \$15 New Jersey minimum wage. “1 in 4 working men and women in New Jersey aren’t paid enough to support themselves, much less sustain a family and Bergen County’s move is a great step in the right direction to ameliorate that across the entire state.”

Yesterday, Governor-Elect Phil Murphy joined Senate President Steve Sweeney and Speaker Elect Craig Coughlin, along with Congressman Donald Norcross, to announce their unified support for a \$15 minimum wage across the state. In New Jersey, nearly 1 million workers make less than \$15 an hour, including municipal and county employees as well as workers in foodservice and retail industries.



Pictured: USUW/IUJAT Local 755 President Joe Gautier, Bergen County Freeholder Germaine Ortiz, Bergen County Freeholder Chair Tracy Zur, Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco, Bergen County Freeholder Vice Chair Tom Sullivan, Bergen County Freeholder David Ganz, Bergen County Freeholder Joan Voss, Working Families Director Analilia Mejia