

Minimum-wage earners win in elections

SANTA FE — Tuesday's election could have both positive and negative impact on efforts next year to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico.

Commentary

The advocacy group New Mexico Voices for Children notes that in all six states where minimum wage bills were on the ballot this year, voters approved an increase.

Neighboring states Arizona and Colorado were among those who passed a wage hike.

In Colorado, the minimum wage will increase to \$6.85 an hour for most workers and to \$3.83 for those who rely heavily on tips, and will be adjusted every year based on the local price index. In Arizona, the minimum will go to \$6.75, and \$3.75 for tipped employees.

"We hope these big wins, particularly in traditionally



Capital View

Walt Rubel

Republican states, will help us gain more bipartisan support for this issue in New Mexico," said Bill Jordan, New Mexico Voices for Children deputy director.

Gov. Bill Richardson's easy

re-election Tuesday will also help those working to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico. Richardson said the failure to get a wage-hike bill through the Legislature last year was the greatest disappointment of his first session, and he has vowed to try again this year.

"I started too late," Richardson said. "I didn't explain it properly. I should have had special recognition of southern New Mexico, some of the

farms."

Richardson said he has been meeting with members of the Legislative Finance Committee on a bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$7.50 an hour, and have some exemptions for agriculture. He said they may reduce the phase-in period from three years to two because they were set back a year when the 2006 bill did not pass.

see WAGES, page 2C

Wages

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

At the same time, one of the prime arguments for Richardson and other proponents of a state minimum wage hike may have been undermined by Tuesday's vote.

"Congress has refused to act," Richardson argued when he spoke to the Las Cruces Sun-News editorial board in October.

That was true before the election. But, new leaders in both the House and Senate have put increasing the minimum wage at the top of their agenda, and President Bush has indicated it may be one issue where he and the new Congress can agree.

One of the most compelling arguments against raising the minimum wage is that it should be a national issue, and an increase in New Mexico only would put businesses on the border with Texas at an economic disadvantage.

It also remains to be seen how much Richardson will be here during the session to campaign for the minimum wage or any other bill. He has said that he will decide in January whether to pursue a run for the presidency. Should he make the decision to run, it will be left up to others to push his legislative agenda in Santa Fe this winter.

Walter Rubel has been a newsman for 25 years and the Santa Fe bureau chief since 2003. He can be reached at wrubel@lcsun-news.com

WALTER RUBEL THE SANTA FE TRAIL

Let feds, not state, impose new minimum wage

SANTA FE - Tuesday's election could have both positive and negative impacts on efforts next year to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico.

The advocacy group New Mexico Voices for Children notes that in all six states where minimum wage bills were on the ballot this year, voters approved an increase. Neighboring states Arizona and Colorado were among those who passed a wage hike.

In Colorado, the minimum wage will increase to \$6.85 an hour for most workers and to \$3.83 for those who rely heavily on tips, and will be adjusted every year based on the local price index. In Arizona, the minimum will go to \$6.75, and \$3.75 for tipped employees

"We hope these big wins, particularly in traditionally Republican states, will help us gain more bipartisan support for this issue in New Mexico," said Bill Jordan, New Mexico Voices for Children deputy director.

Gov. Bill Richardson's easy re-election Tuesday will also help those working to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico. Richardson said the failure to get a wage-hike bill through the Legislature last year was the greatest

disappointment of his first session, and he has vowed to try again this year.

"I started too late," Richardson said. "I didn't explain it properly. I should have had special recognition of southern New Mexico, some of the farms."

Richardson said he has been meeting with members of the Legislative Finance Committee on a bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$7.50 an hour, and have some exemptions for agriculture. He said they may reduce the phase-in period from three years to two because they were set back a year when the 2006 bill did not pass.

At the same time, one of the prime arguments for Richardson and other proponents of a state minimum wage hike may have been undermined by Tuesday's vote.

"Congress has refused to act," Richardson argued when he spoke to the *Las Cruces Sun-News* editorial board in October.

That was true before the election. But, new leaders in both the House and Senate have put increasing the minimum wage at the top of their agenda, and President Bush has indicated it may be one issue where he and the new

"An increase in the minimum wage in New Mexico only would put businesses on the border with Texas at an economic disadvantage."

Congress can agree.

One of the most compelling arguments against raising the minimum wage is that it should be a national issue, and an increase in New Mexico only would put businesses on the border with Texas at an economic disadvantage.

It also remains to be seen how much Richardson will be here during the session to campaign for the minimum wage or any other bill. He has said that he will decide in January whether to pursue a run for the presidency. Should he make the decision to run, it will be left up to others to push his legislative agenda in Santa Fe this winter.

WALTER RUBEL has been a newsman for 25 years and the Santa Fe bureau chief since 2003. He can be reached at wrubel@lcsun-news.com.

The good and bad from Tuesday's results

BY WALTER RUBEL
SANTA FE BUREAU CHIEF

SANTA FE — Tuesday's election could have both positive and negative impacts on efforts next year to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico.

The advocacy group New Mexico Voices for Children notes that in all six states where minimum wage bills were on the ballot this year, voters approved an increase. Neighboring states Arizona and Colorado were among those passed a wage hike.

In Colorado, the minimum wage will increase to \$6.85 an hour for most workers and to \$3.83 for those who rely heavily on tips. It will be adjusted every year based on the local price index. In Arizona, the minimum will go to \$6.75, and \$3.75 for tipped employees

"We hope these big wins, particularly in

Reporting from the capital

traditionally Republican states, will help us gain more bipartisan support for this issue in New Mexico," said Bill Jordan, New Mexico Voices for Children deputy director.

Gov. Bill Richardson's easy re-election Tuesday will also help those working to increase the minimum wage in New Mexico. Richardson said the failure to get a wage-hike bill through the Legislature last year was the greatest disappointment of his first session, and he has vowed to try again this year.

"I started too late," Richardson said. "I didn't explain it properly. I should have had

special recognition of southern New Mexico, some of the farms."

Richardson said he has been meeting with members of the Legislative Finance Committee on a bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$7.50 a hour, and have some exemptions for agriculture. He said they may reduce the phase-in period from three years to two because they were set back a year when the 2006 bill did not pass.

At the same time, one of the prime arguments for Richardson and other proponents of a state minimum wage hike may have been undermined by Tuesday's vote.

"Congress has refused to act," Richardson argued when he spoke to the *Las Cruces Sun-News* editorial board in October.

That was true before the election. But new leaders in both the House and Senate have put increasing the minimum wage at the top of their agenda, and President George Bush

has indicated it may be one issue where he and the new Congress can agree.

One of the most compelling arguments against raising the minimum wage is that it should be a national issue, and an increase in New Mexico only would put businesses on the border with Texas at an economic disadvantage.

It also remains to be seen how much Richardson will be here during the session to campaign for the minimum wage or any other bill. He has said that he will decide in January whether to pursue a run for the presidency. Should he make the decision to run, it will be left up to others to push his legislative agenda in Santa Fe this winter.

Walter Rubel has been a newsman for 25 years and the Santa Fe bureau chief since 2003. He can be reached at wrubel@lcsun-news.com