

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

**Seventy-Eighth Session
March 11, 2015**

The Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair Patricia Farley at 3:19 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, in Room 1214 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Patricia Farley, Chair
Senator James A. Settelmeyer, Vice Chair
Senator Greg Brower
Senator Kelvin Atkinson
Senator Tick Segerblom

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Stewart, Policy Analyst
Haley Johnson, Committee Secretary
Linda Hiller, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

AJ Buhay, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Yvanna Cancela, Culinary Workers Union Local 226
Sylver Uschold, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Danny Thompson, Nevada State AFL-CIO
Georgiy Potulov, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Amanda Buell
Mike Patterson, Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy in Nevada
Dan Bouzek, Lieutenant Governor, Kiwanis Club District 23
Yolanda Florian, Service Employees International Union Nevada
Lizabeth Bonilla, Service Employees International Union Nevada
Paul Moradkhan, Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce
Tray Abney, The Chamber

Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections
March 11, 2015
Page 2

Lea Tauchen, Retail Association of Nevada
Warren Hardy II, Nevada Restaurant Association
John Wagner, Independent American Party
Carol Howell
Bonnie McDaniel
John Ridgeway
Jim Sallee
Janine Hansen, Nevada Families for Freedom
Juanita Clark, Charleston Neighborhood Preservation
Kiersten Varrette
Theresa Navarro
Susan Chandler
Dolores Rael
Paul Lenart

Chair Farley:

I will open this Committee meeting with the hearing on Senate Joint Resolution (S.J.R.) 8.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8: Amends the Nevada Constitution to increase the minimum wage per hour worked. (BDR C-425)

AJ Buhay (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

I support S.J.R. 8. I live in Las Vegas and work as a community organizer with the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN). I work with many immigrant and low-income families who will be directly affected by an increase in the minimum wage. More than 100,000 Nevadans would see their paychecks double. There would be an estimated annual savings of \$22.5 million from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This is because even though these families are working hard, at today's minimum wage, these workers have to rely on some public assistance.

It is a moral injustice if we keep letting hard-working Nevadans earn these poverty wages that do not provide enough for their families. More than 50 percent of children in public schools receive free lunch, which means these families are within the poverty level because they qualify for public assistance. These families are not asking for a handout, but they want quality jobs that provide living wages. These families want a chance to lift themselves up from poverty.

Nevada has been ranked last in so many things pertaining to education and student funding. Let us be the first state to give working families the \$15 minimum wage our workers deserve. Let us put Nevada first on the map with this wage and for a change, let us put Nevadans first.

Chair Farley:

What are some typical minimum wage jobs?

Yvanna Cancela (Culinary Workers Union Local 226):

Outside of fast-food restaurants, which most people associate with minimum wage, there are temporary workers, clerical workers, home health care workers, kitchen jobs, servers, and housekeeping in nonunion casinos and hotels. The majority of hospitality jobs are usually minimum wage, and some office and school janitorial jobs are minimum wage.

Chair Farley:

Where does a single person making Nevada's minimum wage fall on the poverty line?

Sylver Uschold (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

The monthly living wage calculations for Clark County for one adult include \$242 for food, \$112 for medical, \$767 for housing, \$285 for transportation and no extras. For one adult and one child, the income requirement to stay above poverty level is \$43,001 annually; for one adult and two children, it is \$51,600; and for one adult and three children, it is \$65,640.

Chair Farley:

We have a handout with those statistics and more data for Clark County and Washoe County ([Exhibit C](#)).

Senator Settlemeyer:

What is the highest minimum wage in the U.S.?

Ms. Cancela:

I do not know but could find that information for you.

Danny Thompson (Nevada State AFL-CIO):

In 2003, a group of people I was associated with got together and looked at what we could do to improve the lives of the working poor—people who work

40 hours a week and still cannot afford to live. By “live,” I mean to be able to eat, ride public transportation and have a place to live. We filed an initiative petition to raise the minimum wage, but at that time, one of the problems was health care costs. We proposed raising the minimum wage \$1 over the federal minimum wage because Nevada law required the State to match the federal rate. If the employer provided health insurance, the dollar increase was not necessary. The idea of this approach was to incentivize employers to provide health insurance by allowing this exception.

We tied the initiative to the Consumer Price Index to ensure that as inflation rose, so would the minimum wage. We did not want to leave this issue to the whim of the Legislature since that body changes all the time. Instead, we decided to make it a constitutional amendment, requiring two separate votes of the people of Nevada. We gathered signatures and were overwhelmingly successful. We even survived a court challenge with a ruling that we had correctly followed procedures and the minimum wage increase proposal was constitutional.

In 2004, the proposal went to a statewide ballot and got more votes than any candidate or issue on the ballot in every district in the State. In 2006, the issue was on the ballot again and had the same overwhelming success, thus amending the Constitution.

At the time, we wanted the minimum wage even higher, knowing that a mere dollar above the federal minimum was not adequate enough to support a family. Most of the people on these low wages live with someone or are on public assistance like SNAP or Medicaid. These are not people with Swiss bank accounts—they spend their money where they earn it. To truly help the economy, we should raise the minimum wage to a livable wage, which would be achieved by \$15 an hour as proposed in S.J.R. 8. At this wage, workers would be able to buy food and shelter but not necessarily own a car.

This Legislature has been discussing various taxes to pay for the \$1 billion hole in the State’s budget. Raising the minimum wage would help that revenue problem because people on public assistance would be able to get off. I am not talking about bums here, but people who work every day and do not make enough money to eat and live in our State. In 2004 and 2006, we found that people were working not just one or two jobs, but many worked three jobs and slept only 4 hours a day. When we tested this issue back then, we found a

90 percent support of this initiative on all sides of the political spectrum. If you ask people today about raising the minimum wage, I expect you will find the same results.

Chair Farley:

Did you help come up with the figure of \$15 an hour?

Mr. Thompson:

No.

Senator Settelmeyer:

I read online that President Barack Obama delayed the 50-cent increase of the federal minimum wage. Have you heard anything about that?

Mr. Thompson:

No.

Senator Settelmeyer:

It happened in 2013 and the increase was supposed to occur in 2015. I was just trying to figure out why he did that.

Mr. Thompson:

I do not know.

Georgiy Potulov (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):

I support S.J.R. 8. I live in Las Vegas and work for minimum wage. Singing has been my life ever since moving to the U.S. with my family in 1994. We were sponsored by a church, and I had a full scholarship for all 4 years to the American Boychoir School in Princeton, New Jersey.

I moved to Las Vegas to pursue a singing career, but now I am employed at McDonald's, working 30 hours a week which only amounts to \$350 to \$400 every 2 weeks. After rent is paid, I only have about \$100 left to buy food and groceries. I am asking you to support S.J.R. 8 and give a living wage to many Nevada families who are working hard. With a \$15-an-hour wage, I could lift myself out of poverty and do simple things I cannot afford now, such as watch a movie or buy my mom a gift. My shoes are so worn out, and I go to work worrying about how I am going to pay off my bills. Last week, my district manager Paul asked me why no one at McDonald's was working with a smile.

He told me that back in the 1980s he worked at McDonald's for \$3.50 an hour. He did it with a smile, he said.

That minimum wage has not kept up in almost 3 decades. It has barely doubled while gas prices and rent have more than tripled. That same \$3.50 an hour wage would be around \$15.85 an hour today. I am asking you to give a chance for working families to better themselves with jobs that pay a living wage.

Amanda Buell:

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 433,576 Nevadans live below the poverty line. That is 15.8 percent of our population. Full-time hours are estimated at 35 hours a week, but schedules are frequently cut. The average minimum wage worker makes \$9,000 to \$10,000 per year. The Economic Policy Institute reports the benefits of raising the hourly minimum wage to \$15 would include: relief on public assistance programs, such as the U.S. federal earned income tax credit; SNAP; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, commonly known as WIC; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); welfare; and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development housing assistance.

Low-wage workers receive \$5 billion in federal government assistance annually. More than 1.7 million workers would no longer need assistance if he or she earned a living wage. These programs would save 24 cents for every dollar wage increase to minimum wage workers. The Institute for Higher Education Policy reports that only 28 percent of Nevadans are financially able to afford higher education. To answer an earlier question, 29 states and Washington, D.C., have minimum wages above the federal minimum. The highest rates are Washington, D.C., at \$9.50 an hour; Washington is \$9.47 an hour and Oregon is \$9.25 an hour.

The City of Seattle recently raised the hourly minimum wage to \$15. Businesses have reported increased revenues, and many businesses have expanded. There have been no price increases, job losses or benefit cutbacks to executives, and new businesses have begun moving headquarters to Seattle in record numbers.

Workers below the poverty line are not able to participate in a thriving economy. Buying clothes, furniture, décor and even paying rent is a challenge. Going to a doctor, putting gas in a car, let alone buying a car, is a challenge. Getting enough to eat, paying tuition, buying school lunches for children or obtaining a

higher education is a challenge. Going to a museum or restaurant, or buying electronics or luxuries is a challenge. We do not want federal or State benefits. We want to make enough money to live on our own. We want hours, we want stability and we want a living wage.

Mike Patterson (Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy in Nevada):

I support S.J.R. 8. This is an issue that will affect thousands of Nevada's most vulnerable population—our minimum wage workers. In addition to the economic reasons to raise the minimum wage, there is a moral reason. Lutherans believe all of us benefit when those who receive the least for their hard work are better rewarded for their labor and can more fully contribute. In Deuteronomy it reads, "Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns."

An adequate minimum wage is a bedrock of moral value for our Nation. It is immoral that the minimum wage is worth less now than it was in the year Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in Memphis while fighting for living wages for sanitation workers. Prophetic voices like those of Dr. King and others have called for justice for the underprivileged and the poorest in our society.

Pope Francis said in a homily in Vatican City that not paying fair wages is a grave sin. The Argentine pontiff said employers who attend church but treat their employees poorly are using God to cover injustice. Last month, he added that paying a fair wage to employees comes directly from the gospels. He quoted from the apostle Saint James by describing how James insisted on paying proper wages to workers in the fields.

I call on each of you to look at this issue without the blinders of political dogma. Act as the moral leaders of our great State. My only concern about S.J.R. 8 is that it will take 5 years to implement a living wage.

Dan Bouzek (Lieutenant Governor, Kiwanis Club District 23):

I support S.J.R. 8 on moral grounds. At Kiwanis, we often deal with young people. We have programs to help get youths off the street. These kids need a valid alternative because it is impossible to make a living with the current minimum wage. These kids need an alternative that offers the dignity of earning a minimum wage that is a living wage.

Yolanda Florian (Service Employees International Union Nevada):

Home care workers support S.J.R. 8 because this issue affects us all. Home care workers provide valuable care and support to Nevada's seniors and people with disabilities. I do this work because I care about my clients like family.

This is a difficult job that requires both physical and emotional strength. There are approximately 10,000 home care workers in Nevada, including personal care attendants and home care aides. These workers provide care and support to tens of thousands of seniors and people with disabilities. Here in Nevada, as in the Nation, we make an average of less than \$10 an hour. Ninety percent of these home care workers are women, so this becomes a woman's issue and an equal pay issue.

We save the State millions of dollars because home care and community-based care is much more affordable than care in nursing homes or long-term care facilities. This also allows our clients to continue to live with family in their homes and communities, which increases their quality of life.

We are not asking for a handout, just a living wage. This will help the people we care for by reducing the turnover in our workforce. It will also help us care for our families in our communities. Please support S.J.R. 8.

Lizabeth Bonilla (Service Employees International Union Nevada):

I have been a home care worker for 42 years. I support S.J.R. 8 because home care workers and others need a living wage. As a home care worker, I make \$10 an hour. I started 42 years ago for \$8 an hour. At the agency I work for, we do not receive benefits, sick leave or vacation leave. As a result, I cannot afford an apartment, so I live with my grandchildren in a two-bedroom apartment where I share a bedroom.

Low wages force workers like me to receive public assistance, even when we do not want to. An estimated 56 percent of home care workers receive some form of public assistance, including Medicaid and SNAP. I am in that percentage. I have to humble myself to the welfare system, which I thought I would never be a part of. I am now in my golden years and do not have what I expected I would have at this age. I support S.J.R. 8.

Paul Moradkhan (Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce):

We oppose S.J.R. 8 for the potential negative impact it could have on the Nevada economy and the State's workforce. Regarding the economic argument, many of our members who have businesses and employees in the State are already paying higher than Nevada's minimum wage, even for entry level positions that do not require many skills or training. Employers are doing this because it is the right thing to do. Employers are investing in employees because motivated employees drive the market rate for wages.

There is a valid concern about raising the minimum wage to \$15 in the area of job creation or growth. The concern is that this change could result in the elimination of jobs, especially for businesses barely breaking even or losing money because our economy is not yet fully recovered.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated the federal proposal to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 would, once fully implemented, reduce total employment by 500,000 workers. We believe there would be a similar correlation here in Nevada. Employers would have to make hard adjustments to address the additional labor costs. Some options might include workforce reduction or increasing prices.

For the workers who receive minimum wage now, we need to do a better job as a State to help those individuals sharpen their skills and obtain additional training. We support workforce development and training programs to help those employees with their careers. We support those efforts offered throughout the State, including efforts in the community college system. This path will help elevate workers and improve the employment environment in the State.

Tray Abney (The Chamber):

We have always opposed the minimum wage being in the Constitution. We hear extremes on both sides of this issue. One side will say that everyone who makes minimum wage is a teenager. The other side will say all single mothers with kids are making minimum wage. The truth is, we have both.

A lot of these jobs are part-time and the vast majority of them are not long-term. We also know that prices will increase, not in every business in every industry. When I was 16, working in a Springfield, Missouri, cafeteria washing pots, the federal minimum wage went up twice. Both times, the cafeteria had to

raise prices. The customer base was senior citizens, and they were mostly on fixed incomes.

When you almost double a wage, you will price some people out of the job market. An employer will not be hiring the same people with the same skillsets when they are more expensive. We think it is good to have a broader discussion about education and job training. This minimum wage increase would apply to everyone, even to small businesses that may not have the resources. Restaurants, for example, have a small profit margin, so if the minimum wage goes up, the extra money has to come from somewhere—either higher prices or reduced hiring. We oppose S.J.R. 8.

Lea Tauchen (Retail Association of Nevada):

We oppose S.J.R. 8. The retail industry offers a wide variety of job opportunities for employees. We are concerned that imposing an artificial wage level could act as a disincentive for businesses to grow in Nevada. Employers typically respond to higher labor costs by hiring fewer workers. If businesses were to choose to cut or freeze hiring, we think it would be the younger, more inexperienced or entry-level workers who would be hurt most by that action. If these workers cannot gain the skills and experience to become more productive, it will be more difficult for them to achieve higher wages in the future.

Raising the minimum wage could have a domino effect, putting upward pressure on the existing wages of employees already making more than minimum wage. With higher expenses for employers, it would be difficult to increase the number of positions available to all wage earners. We prefer to support policies that give private sector employers the tools to remain competitive and stable in the face of economic challenges.

Chair Farley:

Is there data that reports the impact of higher wages on younger workers? A lot of kids come out of high school and college wanting these types of jobs.

Mr. Moradkhan:

We have information we could forward to the Committee.

Warren Hardy II (Nevada Restaurant Association):

We do not support S.J.R. 8. The restaurant industry is unique in that few restaurant employees make minimum wage because the majority are tipped

employees. That is the dilemma for us because Nevada does not have a tip credit. This makes it difficult to provide high-level, high-paying jobs in our industry. My daughter worked as a server, and she would put her hourly wage paycheck in savings. She lived off her tips.

When the minimum wage increases, it helps the server, but a restaurant that operates on margins somewhere between 2 percent and 5 percent is then challenged to pay more to the cook, greeter or other nontip employee. Until Nevada implements a tip credit that takes that issue into account, we cannot support an increase in the minimum wage. Like all industries, we desperately want ours to be a high-paying, sought-after profession to keep people coming into our workplaces.

John Wagner (Independent American Party):

I do not support S.J.R. 8 because every time you increase the minimum wage, the younger people fall through the cracks. Some of them are not worth the minimum wage. The biggest victims of minimum wage are black youths. More than anyone else, they fall through the cracks.

In Japan, McDonald's is working to make restaurants automated. All you do is pick what you want from a machine, pay the machine and then go get your food. Raising the minimum wage might increase the likelihood that companies like McDonald's will choose to go automated to save money. I hate to see that because I like to see a young face in the restaurant when I go there.

Carol Howell:

I oppose S.J.R. 8, but I am not against a fair wage. I am not against people making a minimum wage that is an entry-level salary. These jobs were never meant to be lifelong positions. You do not spend 20 or 30 years on the same job. This Country was not built on that. We were built on people taking the initiative to get a better education, learn work ethics, become better at their jobs and then change their jobs and go somewhere else.

This bill is not just about minimum wage. You have seniors in this State who did not get an increase in their social security payments for years, and now it is a minimal 2 percent to 3 percent increase per year. Taxes are going up; utilities are going up—how are those seniors going to pay for everything else that has to go up when you are doubling salaries?

If this were about raising a minimum wage, that would be one thing. But that is not what this bill is about. This morning, I sent my opposition to this bill to the Committee. I got one response back from Senator Segerblom, the sponsor of the bill. He asked me if I did not realize this was just an effort to take this issue to a vote of the people. I wrote back that I did realize it, and that I also realize it is an attempt to turn out voters to vote for an increase in wages. This is not a bill about minimum wage, it is about turning out voters at the polls. When I said I realized this was the case, he responded with "Can you blame me?"

Chair Farley:

That is just Senator Segerblom being funny. I have worked with this entire group to not make it political or partisan.

Ms. Howell:

I am not making this partisan. I am a Republican and I care about family. I care about workers. I care about my great-grandson coming up in this world. As a Republican, I can tell you there is a better way to do this than just raising salaries.

Bonnie McDaniel:

I am a 55-year resident of Las Vegas. I oppose this bill as written. I am not opposed to a higher minimum wage. I realize \$7.25 or \$8.25 an hour, our minimum wage, is not enough to live on. However, the minimum wage was not meant to sustain any one person and surely not a family. It was, and still is, a starting point to give teens and others a way to learn responsibility, do something that gives self-esteem, and to teach that working hard, one can move up to bigger and better jobs. By increasing the minimum wage to \$15, employers will not hire entry-level workers and will need to charge more for products and goods.

After I saw the bill, I noticed that section 16, subsection B, lines 33 to 35 on page 2 say "An employer shall not discharge, reduce the compensation of or otherwise discriminate" Are you telling us we cannot fire our employees or let anyone go if the minimum wage goes up? If that is the case, I will let all my employees go today whether the people vote to raise this or not.

When McDonald's was started, the price for a hamburger was 15 cents. As wages went up, so did the cost of the hamburger. Today, a simple one-patty hamburger with nothing on it is \$1.29. Can you only imagine what the cost of

that hamburger will be if the wages go to \$15 an hour? It would be more than \$5. No one would go there because charging more will not increase the quality of the product, only the price. Therefore, no workers would be needed and no entry jobs would be had. Some companies would even have to close.

Doubling the minimum wage will hurt young people and minorities the most. It has become very difficult for young people to find a job. By opposing S.J.R. 8, you will keep young people on the job and keep Nevada companies open.

As far as people not getting any better jobs or better pay, in 42 years, this young lady has been a personal care aide? I started out as an aide back in 1969 and went from that to a certified nursing assistant to a registered nurse to a trauma nurse for more than 40 years. She could get a job that would enable her to go back to school; the State would help her with the tuition, she could get loans and grants and she could better herself.

John Ridgeway:

I oppose S.J.R. 8. Section B of the bill says that if someone does not want to work at these set pay scales, they have to join a union to get a waiver. In accordance with Article 23 (4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." The treaties hold the same weight and effect as the Constitution itself. When you take the right away, you turn it into a requirement.

Jim Sallee:

I used to see kids getting jobs delivering papers and working after school, but I do not see that anymore. I sympathize with people trying to work a full-time job with health insurance while raising a family on minimum wage. When we look to our national situation and the jobs moving overseas, the government regulations increasing the cost of doing business and the flood of immigrants, it puts pressure on those here to get a good job and climb the ladder of success. We need to do something about that.

Janine Hansen (Nevada Families for Freedom):

I oppose S.J.R. 8. Jim Clifton, the chairman and CEO of Gallup, recently reported that only 44.2 percent of adults are working 30 hours a week or more. There are 92.9 million Americans not working because they cannot find jobs. These people are off the official unemployment rolls because their time to be on

there has ended. It is a lie that we have a 6.1 percent unemployment rate. Many more people, in fact almost 100 million Americans, are not working.

What S.J.R. 8 would do by doubling the minimum wage would put more people out of work. The CEO of CKE Restaurants, Inc., stated another problem for young people, which this measure would certainly hurt, is that their hours have been cut. Many experienced workers who have had their hours cut due to the Affordable Care Act are willing to take minimum wage entry-level jobs because they need the hours. This also reduces the number of entry-level positions for inexperienced young people. I have 13 grandchildren. I am interested in what the future holds for them.

This will also hurt seniors. It is difficult now for seniors to meet their costs. Many are discriminated against in trying to find employment because employers want younger workers. This bill would not help those who need it the most.

Juanita Clark (Charleston Neighborhood Preservation):

My organization opposes S.J.R. 8. We question how this comes to be a government issue. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit D](#)).

Senator Segerblom:

People ask where the \$15 figure came from. It was from me. It seemed like a good round number. Looking at it now, it turns out that \$15 an hour is around the fulcrum of where a living wage would be so a person could work full time and not be subsidized by the government. When you pay a McDonald's worker \$8 an hour, you and I basically pay to subsidize that person to subsidize McDonald's. Is this what we as a society want to do?

Remember, this is a constitutional amendment, not a bill. If we pass it this Session, we have to pass it again in the 2017 Session, and then it goes to the voters in 2018. If approved, it would become effective in 2019. So we are looking at the economy 4 years from now for a minimum wage of \$15 an hour. This is only a vote of the people. We are not raising the minimum wage now, but we are asking if we want the voters of Nevada to have a chance to vote on this in 2018.

I am flexible on the dollar amount, but when you look at the timeframe, it looks like a good number. Seattle and Los Angeles have both adopted \$15 as their minimum hourly wage. I am sure that by 2018, other cities will have that same

figure too. As you heard from testimony, several years ago these were part-time jobs and student jobs, but now these are full-time jobs for many people working 40 hours per week. Most people cannot survive on this wage, and as a consequence, you and I have to pay the difference.

Senator Atkinson:

I want to go on record and say I think this is an issue everyone should care about. One political party does not want people taking government handouts or people living on social services, food stamps and other assistance, and the other party wants everyone to have a livable wage.

The truth is, people getting public assistance do not want to be on these programs. They want to make a livable wage and support their families. I hope we can get something done about this issue during this Session. We need to get somewhere on this. I have heard from a lot of people about this issue, and I support Senator Segerblom on S.J.R. 8.

Senator Settelmeyer:

I am curious about asking for \$15 an hour versus saying we should double the federal minimum wage. By the time we get this voted through in 6 years, \$15 might be too low. Why pick an arbitrary number now? Rather than saying something like as the Consumer Price Index increases—which is already in the law on the federal level so it automatically increases, why not just look at the concept of going a certain amount above the federal minimum wage?

Senator Segerblom:

I am open to that. Today that amount is necessary for a person working 40 hours a week to not require food stamps or other assistance. At that rate, that worker is paying into the system, not taking out. Do we want to subsidize McDonald's so they can give us stuff that is actually making us sicker?

I am open to suggestion. We could have it be a step process, so the raise goes in increments, not immediately to \$15. I just picked that number as a starting point for talking purposes so we could take the existing constitutional law and say we are going to raise it to a more livable wage.

Kiersten Varrette:

I support S.J.R. 8. According to *Mother Jones* magazine, the average fast-food worker is 29 years old. The situation has changed—it is not young people

anymore. It is not high school students or people getting out of high school and going into fast-food. It is working class people trying to make a living.

Most fast-food workers do not have steady schedules. More commonly, these workers have their schedules switched, and they have to work or get fired. Workers cannot do anything without those steady hours. Without raising the minimum wage, there really is not much of a living to be made.

Right now, McDonald's workers in Sweden make \$20 an hour. The Big Mac meal there is the equivalent of \$6.80 in the U.S., so do not worry about your fast-food, there is not going to be a raise in prices. I work for KFC and am homeless. I bounce from couch to couch.

I am a homeless person working full-time. I cannot support myself on what I make. I am not buying anything else but food and giving money to people who put me up on their couch for a week. I have gone to welfare. I appreciate Medicaid. Maybe I can commit myself to a hospital so I can stay there instead. No thank-you. The Big Mac meal here is only \$7, by the way. Seems like ours is more expensive than in Sweden.

Theresa Navarro:

I support S.J.R. 8. Regarding the choice of \$15 an hour, the voters voted it in 2004. I prefer \$20 an hour. We have been fighting since 2004 when people voted for this. Now it is before this Committee and we will have to wait until 2017, and maybe by then it will be \$20.

If we increased the minimum wage to \$15, people would not have to buy food stamps, get TANF, Medicaid and other public assistance from the State. Reducing the programs we pay for with our tax dollars is money saved if we have a reasonable minimum wage.

I work with families who are losing their homes—even with two minimum wage workers paying the mortgage. If one person loses his or her job, it can all topple. One family I worked with was eating every other day to try to survive. This was to make their house payment.

Susan Chandler:

I am a retired professor from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). In 2002, while I was at UNR, I authored the first study of the living wage in Nevada.

Since then, I have done much research and writing on this issue. There are studies on the impact in communities from raising the minimum wage. Almost universally, the fears people talk about—people losing their jobs, employers having to move, young people getting shut out—have not been realized.

I have interviewed hundreds of people for these studies, and these workers are not generally temporary workers or beginning workers. They are people with families who need the money. Saying \$15 or \$16 an hour sounds like a lot of money, but it is what people need to live on to be above the poverty line. We did studies of what people need to survive in Nevada, and \$15 an hour right now is on target. If anything, it is low. I urge you to support S.J.R. 8.

Chair Farley:

I have received two documents from Stacey Shinn from PLAN that illustrate some facts on Nevada wages ([Exhibit E](#) and [Exhibit F](#)).

Dolores Rael:

I have been a home care worker for 16 years. Because of the needs of the woman I care for, I moved her into my home. She needs 24-hour care. My employer has taken hours from me, so I only have 3 hours a day for 7 days to take care of my client. I know it is very hard for her. If she was living by herself, she would die. She is diabetic and has many needs.

When I started taking care of her, I had a union job. I worked at MGM and passed my seventh year there. Please support S.J.R. 8. I am not on welfare or food stamps, but I have applied and hope I get them. I do not want to be on welfare. I cannot take on another patient because mine is so much work.

Chair Farley:

I will close the hearing on S.J.R. 8 and ask for public comment.

Paul Lenart:

I am a 30-year respiratory therapist, recently retired. During some of those years I was union. That is when the jobs were really good. During some of those years I was not union. This is the most antiworker Legislature I have seen during my time in Nevada. I want to get on record that we are very clear on who they are. Watch out for who we are.

Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections
March 11, 2015
Page 18

Chair Farley:

The meeting is adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Linda Hiller,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Patricia Farley, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit		Witness or Agency	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	18		Attendance Roster
S.J.R. 8	C	4	Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada	Living Wage Calculations for Clark County and Washoe County
S.J.R. 8	D	1	Charleston Neighborhood Preservation	Written Testimony in Opposition
S.J.R. 8	E	3	Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada	Fact Sheet on Nevada Wages
S.J.R. 8	F	3	Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada	Wage Data Sheet