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Higher minimum wage in Alaska has support

SMALL BUSINESS: Poll finds many favor a state differential.


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A new poll of Alaska small businesses found about 45 percent favor pegging Alaska's minimum wage to 50 cents higher than the federal minimum, according to the National Federation of Independent Business.

"In any other state, this would have received a 99 percent 'No' response," said Denny DeWitt, the group's Alaska director.

"The reason the 'Yes' vote was so high here was not because employers want to increase costs on themselves, but because of Alaska's history of keeping its minimum wage ahead of the federal level," he said.



Alaska's minimum used to float at 50 cents above the federal rate but it has been flat at \$7.15 an hour since 2003.

The federal minimum wage is \$5.85, but it will rise to \$6.55 this summer and then to \$7.25 in July 2009.

Other poll findings:

- 56 percent said there should be a lower "training wage" if the minimum wage is raised.
 - 69 percent said the state's unemployment benefit should not be raised to \$370 a week from \$248 and the maximum wage on which the amount of an unemployment benefit is based, lifted to \$42,000 from \$26,750.
 - 78 percent said dependents should not be able to stay on family health-insurance plans until age 26.
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