

**BUFFALO NEWS****WHY A HIGHER MINIMUM WAGE IS GOOD FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

By BILL HILLIKER

I'm a small business owner, and the so called "pro-business groups" don't speak for me. Like many small business owners across the state, I support a higher minimum wage. This isn't labor against business. It's the vast majority of New Yorkers against a small clique of politically connected lobbyists and Albany insiders.

Why do I support a higher minimum wage? Because I have a conscience, to begin with. I believe that in America, people who are willing to work full time should be able to provide for themselves and their children. But full-time work at today's minimum wage is barely \$10,000 a year - not enough to support a single adult, let alone someone with children.

But raising the minimum wage makes sense from a business perspective, too.

The most important asset I have as a business owner is my employees. Their skills, their energy and their commitment make all the difference in the world. It's well worth it to pay for those qualities - that's why I pay well above the legal minimum.

Meanwhile, I have to compete against businesses that pay starvation wages. Worse yet, they are rewarded by the government for doing so. Because I pay a decent wage, my workers aren't eligible for anti-poverty programs like food stamps or Medicaid. But low-wage workers are - Wal-Mart even hands out instructions for applying to these programs to new employees.

The only companies paying \$5.15 are the Wal-Marts and the McDonald's. How the CEOs of those companies sleep at night is beyond me. Most employers want their employees to earn a decent wage, rather than live in poverty. It's both good business sense and the right thing to do.

**11 days until session ends!**

**For the latest on the campaign to raise the minimum wage, visit [www.515isnotenough.org](http://www.515isnotenough.org)**

*The author of this June 7th op-ed is the owner of American Images in South Buffalo. The full text is at [www.515isnotenough.org](http://www.515isnotenough.org).*