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## Indiana common construction wage

Illinois' current wage bill is good for Illinois workers, businesses and families. As evidence, we just have to look to our neighbors in Indiana, where the prevailing pay was repealed in July 2015. The prevailing salary serves as the local minimum wage for publicly funded construction works such as roads, bridges, schools and police stations. The act stabilizes wages and benefits and creates an equal playing field for local contractors. When the prevailing wage standards are abolished, the middle class will suffer the most. And that's what happened in Indiana. According to a new study, the repeal of the prevailing wage, Indiana's common construction wage, has already hurt the state. After the repeal, construction workers took a substantial pay cut of more than 8%. Wages for the lowest paid workers were cut even more, exacerbating inequality in the state. Study: Effects of repealing the common construction wage in Indiana: Impact on 10 construction market results. This slide show requires JavaScript. By lowering wages and benefits, the repeal of the prevailing wage will attract less educated workers. In Indiana, the share of the construction workforce without a high school degree has skyrocketed. At the same time, the productivity of construction workers in Indiana grew 5 percent slower than in midwest states with wages, such as Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. Evidence shows that the repeal led to a stream of low skills, high turnover and less secure workers from other states working on taxpayer-funded projects. The same thing happened in gulf coast states after former President George W. Bush temporarily suspended federal Davis-Bacon pay standards due to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. All these facts on the ground are facing absurd claims made by those who oppose the prevailing wage. The same tired, old, ideologically motivated accusations we hear here in Illinois were lobbied in Indianapolis. Repeal could save about 10 to 20 percent, argued Indiana State Representative Jerry Torr. Repeal puts taxpayers first and provides much-needed relief for cash-short-running local governments, said then-Governor and current Vice President Mike Pence. However, the actual data show that these accusations were misleading at best and misleading at worst. The repeal did not increase competition. The average public project in northern Indiana had three contractors who offered to do the work before repeal. After the repeal? The average was 3 bidders. Worse still, the repeal has had no impact on the cost of public school projects. No impact. Pence and Torr in no cost savings were provided. Ed Soliday, deputy Republican leader of the Indiana House of Representatives, said it best last year when he confirmed: We got rid of the prevailing salary and so far it hasn't saved a penny. Probably. The people who were most upset that we overturned the common salary were the locals. Because locals, frankly, want to pay local contractors and they want local contractors to go to the dentist in their own city. ... There are no 22% savings when the total cost of labour is 22%. It's rhetoric. So far, I haven't seen a penny of savings from it. Both Illinois lawmakers and taxpayers should heed Representative Soliday's warnings, a new 2018 report from Indiana, a previous 2013 study on wages in Illinois, and a sledgehams of peer-reviewed research. Repealing the prevailing wage will have negative consequences for our neighbors in Indiana. Wages were cut, inequality increased, skills shortages worsened and productivity fell – all without saving a penny. The prevailing wage ensures that projects are done correctly and produce good middle-class jobs for skilled local workers. The result is a stronger economy. Click here to read the impact of repealing the common construction wage in Indiana: Impact on 10 construction market results. Click to read the summary of the report. By Malkie Wall, David Madland and Karla Walter December 22, 2020, 9:07 Am See also: Guidelines for strengthening state and local prevailing wage laws: Raising standards for government-funded work See also: Raising the bar: States and local governments can use prevailing industry standards to raise minimum standards for private sector workers What is the prevailing wage? The prevailing salary is basic salary and benefits paid to a number of equally paid workers in some geographical geography. Policymakers can use the prevailing levels of compensation to set pay and benefit floors for local workers – for example, construction workers in government-funded projects in Minneapolis1, or guards who provide government contract services in New York.2 Existing wage laws can ensure that government dollars do not underseaidate local pay and benefit standards prevent a race to the bottom of publicly funded contractors. , support good jobs and provide good value for taxpayers. Where do the prevailing salaries are used? The Davis-Bacon Act and the Services Contracts Act have long required contractors and subcontractors under federally funded or assisted construction and service contracts to have their own existing wage laws.4 In recent years, lawmakers in several states - including Michigan, Indiana, West Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and Kentucky - have moved to weaken or repeal these safeguards, or have prevented urban actions, which often have negative economic results and little cost savings.6 At the same time, other places are seeking to extend the current wage requirements to other types of work. 1000 1000 Several New Jersey municipalities have enacted requirements for construction service workers to be paid valid wages for state-owned or leased properties.7 And in 2019, Maine changed its laws to require prevailing salaries for all construction projects that are at least \$50,000 and financed in whole or in part from government funds – not just allowed by government agencies.8 What are the benefits of existing wage laws? Workers, businesses and taxpayers all benefit from this type of policy: support good wages and benefits. Studies consistently show that existing wage laws help staff members earn middle-class incomes.9 They also expand health insurance coverage and increase the proportion of workers working with retirement plans.10 Even wage laws in low-wage occupations such as janitor or food services can support reimbursement rates well above the legislative threshold.11 Help close the racial pay gap. One statistical analysis found that the income gap between white and black construction workers would be about 7 percentage points lower if a state without a current wage law passed such a law.12 Existing wage laws can also be combined with targeted rental regulations that can help increase the recruitment of women and black and Latino workers in the construction industry.13 , existing wage laws can also ensure that government spending does not undermine standards in the service sector, where many jobs are black , held by Latin Americans and migrant workers.14 Promote quality work and provide good value for taxpayers. Studies show that existing wage laws increase employee productivity, reduce injury rates and increase apprenticeships, helping to address the shortage of skilled labour in the construction sector.15 In addition, wage standards laws in the services sector have been shown to reduce turnover and improve the quality of service.16 As they guarantee a stable and competent workforce, the prevailing wage legislation delivers good value for taxpayers. Moreover, numerous studies refute claims that prevailing wages increase construction costs.17 Studies show that these laws have positive effects on public budgets by increasing the work of local contractors, reducing the leakage of local dollars,18 increasing state and local tax revenue growth19 and reducing workers' dependence on government programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).20 Equal the playing field for high-road employers. Prevailing wage demands prevent low-road companies from undercutting high-road employers who are committed decent salaries and benefits in tenders. Let us give employers a clear guideline on what constitutes an acceptable level of compensation, which means that for high-haul employers that they can compete and win government contracts. Experience is to show that by raising employee standards, governments encourage more companies to conclude contracts.21 Protect the profits of union workers. Strong wage laws prevent low-road subcontractors from undermining the higher standards that workers achieve through collective bargaining. In fact, existing wage laws are generally particularly important for the protection of market interest rates in areas with strong trade unions.22 Unionised workers and employers are gaining stability, knowing that low-road contractors do not consistently underserf labour standards negotiated through private sector negotiations. In addition, existing wage laws can help standardize compensation rates between unions and union-free construction sites. Promotes sectoral standards. Since they extend market wages and benefits – sometimes reflecting collectively negotiated prices – to all covered workers, existing wage legislation is a key support for promoting a high sectoral level.23 Standardisation of compensation across the industry leads to higher wages and benefits for more workers, reduces economic inequality and reduces wage inequality between race and gender.24 It can also increase productivity by encouraging companies to compete on the basis of quality, and no low labour costs. Which sectors could benefit from the prevailing wage protection? Policymakers can raise standards for millions of American workers by using existing wage legislation to raise standards in the construction and service sectors. Many people associate prevailing wages with the construction industry because numerous federal, state and local laws require contractors and subcontractors in public works projects to pay their employees local, prevailing salaries. However, governments can also demand the prevailing pay from service workers such as maintenance staff, guards, food service workers, call centre workers and temporary agency service workers. Extending the existing pay security to all state-funded service work is particularly important in order to raise standards for women and color workers, which make up a significant proportion of the service workforce.25 Will prevailing wages apply only to direct government contracts? Not. Policymakers have enacted existing wage legislation providing for reimbursement rates for various government-funded jobs26, including but not limited to direct government contracts, grants, loans and tax incentives. The prevailing wage standards should also apply to employees of service contracts for state-owned or rented properties. In addition, some cities and states have enacted sector-specific minimum wage laws – which the authors call industry standard27 – which operate in a way that reflects traditional existing wage laws but regulates private companies that do not do government-funded or assisted work. For example, Washington, D.C. requires guards in any commercial office building to be paid at least the prevailing salary.28 How to wage requirements compatible with minimum wages? State and local policymakers can set pay and benefit standards in a variety of ways and adopt a number of approaches to raising employee standards across the income area. The prevailing wage standards are also useful in places with high area minimum wages because they have the required benefit supplements and can protect middle-income earners from a high standard of living. Different pay mechanisms serve different purposes: Basic minimum wages, paid leave and fair scheduling laws, which apply equally to all workers, regardless of industry or occupation. These types of minimum standards help address unacceptable ailments or severe financial burdens and are an essential tool for raising the basic standards for tens of millions of workers across the economy.29 Existing wage laws determine wages and benefit rates based on market conditions, which are often higher than the most common minimum standards. Importantly, the prevailing wage laws also set the floor for government-funded work so that public contracts do not lower standards. These types of laws tend to produce the highest rates of compensation when some employers in the sector already pay decent wages and benefits, as is often the case in areas with strong unions. In Chicago, for example, the prevailing hourly burden for electricians is more than \$85.30 in New York, when cleaners in city service contracts earn more than \$40 an hour in combined pay and benefits.31 But even in slightly lower pay areas, benefit claims can often ensure that the prevailing reimbursement rates are higher than the legal minimum. For example, the combined wage and benefit rate for food service workers in federal contracts in Durham, North Carolina is \$15.45 - almost double the state minimum wage of \$7.25.32 and commercial painters on state public works projects in New Mexico - where the minimum wage is \$9.00 an hour - earn a basic salary of \$17.00 an hour plus \$6.88 an hour in fringe benefits.33 Taken together, the above approaches can help raise standards for the lowest paid workers while supporting strong income growth across the labour market. In areas where endemic poverty pay exists and where workers face significant barriers to organisation, policymakers should consider adopting complementary policies , such as employee boards34, that give workers a voice in setting workplace standards. Malkie Wall is a research associate with the Center for American Progress. David Madland is The man at the center. Karla Walter is senior director of employment policy at the Centre. Endnotes Endnotes Endnotes

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