

## Minimum Wage War May Return To Washington

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If Democrats take control of the U.S. House of Representatives this November, among the first bills they'll push is one increasing the now \$5.15-an-hour federal minimum wage.

Or so current Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has pledged.

That would revive on the Washington front the minimum wage war, which in recent years has been fought almost entirely in state capitals.

Oh sure, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., have put in bills to raise the hourly wage to \$7.25. But as Jen Kern, head of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), a nationwide community organization pushing to raise the minimum wage, concedes, "There's no hope in D.C. Not as long as Republicans are in [control of] Congress." The federal wage was last raised in 1997.

Meanwhile, 20 states, most of which went Democratic in the 2004 presidential election, have mandated minimum wages higher than the federal level. North Carolina could soon join that list, as recent legislation to bump the wage up to \$6.15 now awaits approval from the governor, who is not opposed to the raise. Even cities have been getting into the act, and not just the District of Columbia. Albuquerque, N.M., established its own minimum wage last month, joining Santa Fe, N.M., and San Francisco as municipalities with required wages higher than the federal level.

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