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MINIMUM WAGE UNDER FIRE IN SEATTLE Legal Advocacy Group Says Workers' Rights Are At Stake

SEATTLE, WA- Free Speech For People, a national non-profit legal advocacy and public education organization, is joining the defense of Seattle's new "living wage" law, now under fire from the International Franchise Association, the National Restaurant Association, and other industry trade groups.

Last Thursday, Free Speech For People submitted a "friend of the court" brief to the federal district court in Seattle, arguing that Seattle's living wage law should be upheld against industry claims that it violates alleged rights of corporations under the U.S. Constitution. [The amicus brief is available here.](#)

In *International Franchise Association v. City of Seattle*, franchised businesses allege that Seattle's living wage law violates their alleged constitutional rights. They argue that, because the law's implementation schedule treats franchised businesses as "large" businesses (which must pay the full \$15/hour wage in 2018) rather than "small" businesses (which have until 2025 to comply), it discriminates against them in violation of the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the laws.

Free Speech For People's amicus brief cites primary historical materials showing that the authors of the Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment (which includes the guarantee of equal protection) were deeply concerned about whether newly-freed slaves could earn "fair, living wages." This legislative history indicates that Seattle's living wage law (which has enormous positive impact on racial minorities) fulfills, rather than violates, the Fourteenth Amendment.

Ron Fein, Legal Director of Free Speech For People, said: "We need to put a stop to this dangerous constitutional argument. The franchised businesses had their opportunity to make their case to the city, and they lost. They shouldn't be allowed to run to court under the banner of the U.S. Constitution."

Joining Ron Fein as co-counsel on the amicus brief is Harry Williams, a Seattle constitutional lawyer.

Free Speech For People works to challenge the misuse of corporate power and restore democracy to the people. The organization advances the movement to amend the U.S. Constitution to overturn *Citizens United v. FEC*, *Buckley v. Valeo*, and the fabricated doctrine of corporate constitutional rights, and it engages in legal advocacy for a new jurisprudence in defense of our democracy. To learn more about Free Speech For People, visit www.freespeechforpeople.org.