



OPINION

I'm a small business owner, here's why a \$15 minimum wage works for us

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Rivers: Raising our starting pay to over \$15 an hour has supported our continued acceleration to a position of national leadership in our niche market. We did this all without having to raise prices on any of our 1,500-plus items. (Illustration Pixabay, NJ Advance Media)

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By [Star-Ledger Guest Columnist](#)

By **Ron Rivers**



As the founder and owner of a small business here in New Jersey, I not only understand the importance of paying workers a living wage, but I put that value into practice every single pay period.

At my company, Love2brew, we pay all of our employees at least \$15 an hour - and it works.

I founded [Love2brew](#) in 2011 to share the joy of home-brewed beer and winemaking with enthusiasts across the country. My team entered the home-brew industry with an understanding that a high level of service and customer support would set us apart from our competition. As most small-business owners know, the quality of services offered creates loyalty to the products you sell.

Since our founding, we learned that the best retention and performance came from team members who were earning at least \$15 an hour. We saw this in their enthusiasm, focus and overall willingness to go the extra mile for every customer we serve. With that lesson learned, all Love2brew employees now make at least \$15 an hour. We see this as a critical component to meeting and often exceeding our customers' expectations of excellent service. Simply put, paying a living wage assures our team a level of personal and economic stability that translates into a passion for our purpose.

At Love2brew, the results speak for themselves as our customers have been coming back for over seven years.

Raising our starting pay to over \$15 an hour has supported our continued acceleration to a position of national leadership in our niche home-brew market. We did this all without having to raise prices on any of our 1,500-plus items. And make no mistake, Love2brew is still very much a small business with only three employees, but that hasn't deterred us from paying everyone on our team at least \$15 an hour. Supporting a \$15 minimum wage isn't only for large firms.

Paying our employees a decent starting salary is good for business as fair wages provide a



economy alike.

Of course, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is good for working families, too.

Across New Jersey, far too many families struggle to make ends meet, working jobs that pay less than \$15 an hour. We all experience the high cost of living in New Jersey, and therefore understand that \$1,000 a month in take-home pay does not cover necessary living expenses. Even two minimum-wage jobs would barely cover rent, food, transportation costs and other basics for most New Jersey residents.

No one earning minimum wage has much, if any, money to put back into the economy -- not to eat out, go to the movies, drive down to the Shore for a weekend, or invest in a hobby like home-brewing. The current minimum wage resigns hardworking families to a constant fight for survival and prevents them from accessing the resources necessary to transform their circumstances in life.

The idea of paying workers a fair wage isn't new or revolutionary. Historical data help us understand that wage increases lead to more spending and higher overall employment levels. In theory and practice, our society functions best when all members can meet their basic needs and have the opportunity to better themselves.



By denying sections of our population a chance to earn more at the base level, we impair the ability of those individuals to contribute to our communities in meaningful ways. We also know for a fact that well-paid employees are happy to reinvest back into the enterprises that support them, meaning more beers and more cheers for our entire team.

The governor is correct that we must work to raise wages across all sectors in New Jersey. Establishing a higher minimum wage is a first -- and essential -- step for growing our economy and making sure it works for everyone.

Ron Rivers, 34, is the founder and CEO of North Brunswick-based [Love2brew Homebrew Supply](#) and the founder and executive director of [OurSociety.org](#).

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