

CT Minimum Wage Increases in 2026

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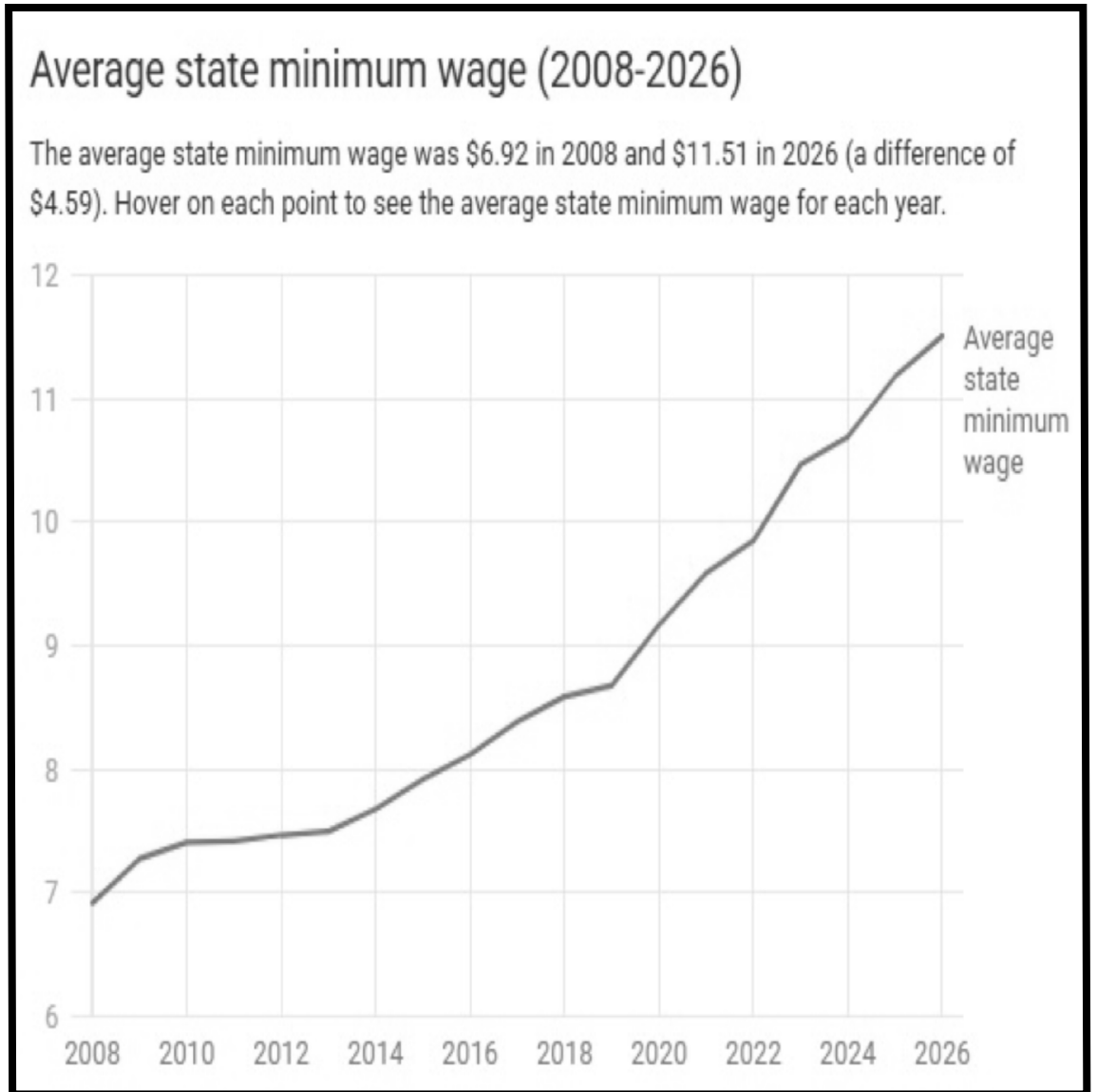
Management Editor

With the start of the new year, Connecticut's Governor Lamont announced an increase in the minimum wage from \$16.35 to \$16.94. It is an opportunity to fight the effects of inflation, reduce inequality, and hopefully address poverty across the state. Not only a new initiative for CT, 18 other states also implemented a higher minimum wage beginning January 1st. Increased local spending as a result of the new wages are expected to stimulate local economies.

Employment in Connecticut has restrictions for teenagers ages 14-17, who must comply with federal youth employment provisions, and commonly start working only in select jobs like youth camp staff. 16-17 year olds are also limited to only 6-32 hours when school is in session and can only work between 6 am and 11 pm.

This improvement in wages may benefit Westhill students as it allows teen workers to better support themselves and their families, while also gaining more financial independence. It's an exciting prospect for Vikings who may be employed after school or on weekends.

"We will be making more money every paycheck, and it's always helpful even when it's a small change," said Abby Ballard ('27). Also, as juniors and seniors make their way onto the roads, there are additional expenses that students hope higher wages will help to cover. "Some of us need to save up for a car which is so expensive, as well as college tuition and application fees," said Bella Witt ('27). Higher wages have also been shown to increase work motivation, as those



Average State Minimum Wage in the U.S. from 2008 to 2026
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employed have a greater incentive to complete their work: a higher paycheck.

Better mental health has also been demonstrated to be an

the National Institute of Health. Increased earnings may additionally reduce the likelihood of teens dropping out of high school to work, as they may now be able to sufficiently assist their families as another source of income while still working part-time. While in terms of the overall economy, the minimum wage increase will generally benefit workers, it may actually reduce employment opportunities for teens.

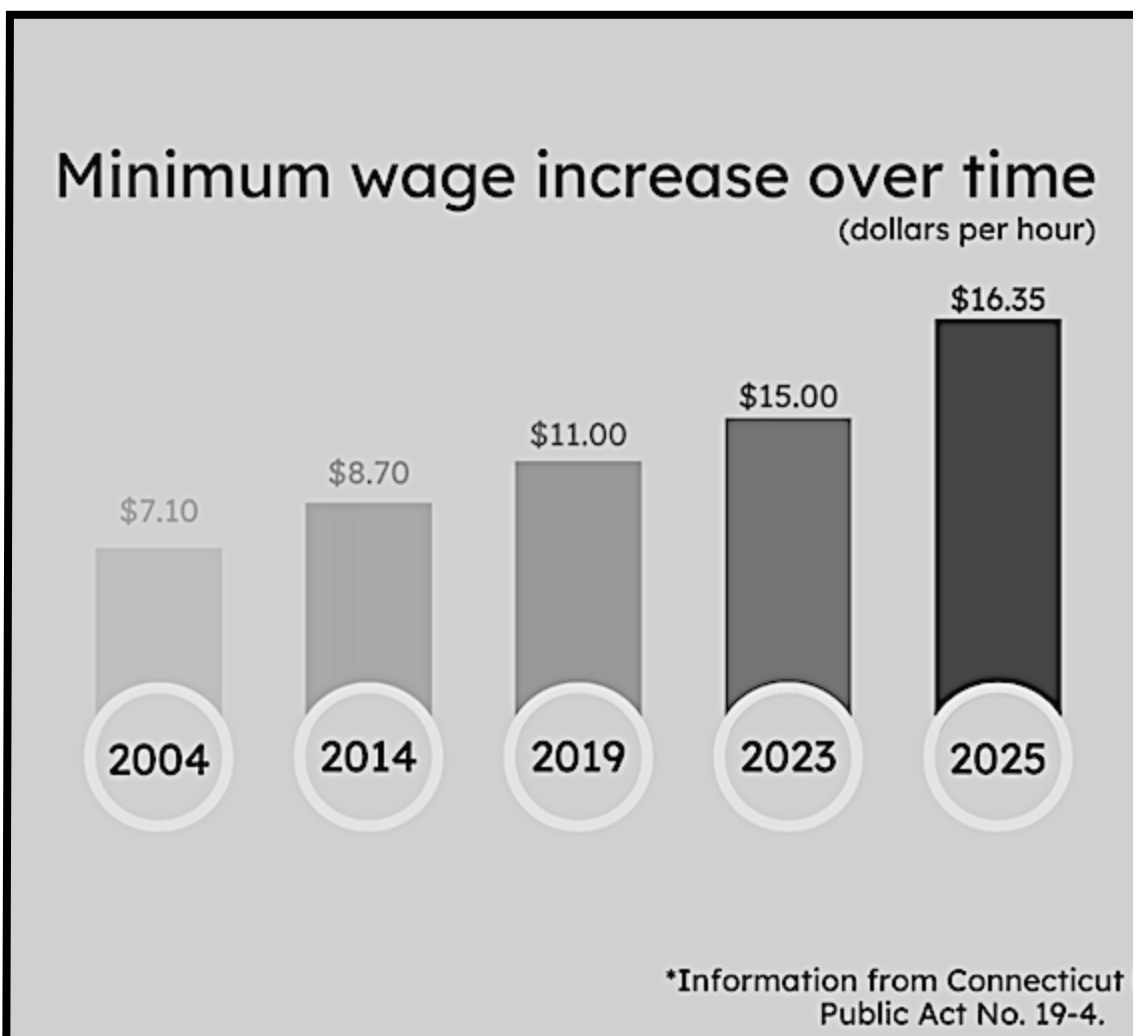
When salaries and wages rise, employers are frequently forced to cut positions, especially entry-level ones that are regularly held by teenagers. Easy work for teens, such as certain menial tasks like cashiering and inventory management, may now become automated, which eliminates the need for their positions. Competition increases as well, as more people are fighting for higher paying jobs.

On the first day of every

year, the U.S. Department of Labor reviews that percentage change in the Federal Employment Cost Index (ECI), and adjusts the minimum wage accordingly, to keep worker's compensation at pace with inflation and consider the rising cost of living across the country.

As states like Mississippi have a very low cost of living, they abide by the federal minimum wage, \$7.25, which does not get adjusted often. Connecticut, on the other hand, has one of the highest costs of living, which results in a minimum wage that is almost \$10 higher than the national requirement.

The Westhill community awaits the impact a higher minimum wage will bring to our student workers, as well as the hopeful improvement in our state economy.



Minimum Wage increase in Connecticut from 2004 to 2025 .
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