

‘UpFront’ panel debates impact of increasing minimum wage

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A union leader says a higher minimum wage would help millions of working people, while a think tank scholar countered that the free market should determine wages.

“Millions and millions of working people would benefit from a raise in the minimum wage, whether they are at \$7.25 an hour right now, or even making something like 15, 16, 17, 18 dollars an hour. In our state, two-thirds of people are paid less than \$20 an hour. They’ve been waiting too long for this market to deliver living wages,” said Peter Rickman, president of the Milwaukee Area Service and Hospitality Workers Organization.

“We know from research that job loss results when the government intervenes in wage setting,” countered Angela Rachidi, a scholar for the American Enterprise Institute. “While some people might be raised out of poverty, a number of people actually are driven into poverty, because they lose jobs because of minimum wage laws.”

The two appeared together Sunday on “UpFront,” produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

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Milwaukee service and hospitality workers carried what they said were 20,000 petitions to City Hall on Thursday. They called for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and asked the city to open a dialogue with workers and employers about improving employment standards for people in that sector.

Rickman said a \$15-an-hour minimum wage is a start, “so we can make work pay for Wisconsinites.”

“What’s unrealistic is trying to support yourself and a family on \$7.25 or even \$15 an hour. That’s why we say it’s just a start,” Rickman said.

“We should let the market work the way it was intended to work,” Rachidi countered.

“The majority of people do not earn the minimum wage, and that’s because the market works and the market determines wages,” she said.

Also on the program, WisPolitics.com Editor JR Ross said Justice Daniel Kelly has raised the most money so far in the race for Wisconsin Supreme Court, followed Dane County Judge Jill Karofsky.

The third candidate in the race, Marquette Law School Professor Ed Fallon, has raised the least money, Ross said, and has the most challenging path to advance from Tuesday’s primary.

Ross said this year’s court race is critical for liberals who hope to eventually win control of the court.

While control is not at stake this year, Ross said liberals need to win the conservative Kelly’s seat to have a chance to flip control in 2023, when conservative Chief Justice Pat Roggensack, comes up for re-election.

See more from the program: <http://www.wisn.com/upfront>