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New Seasons Market announces support for public policy to raise Oregon's minimum wage

Local business leaders—including Grand Central Bakery, HOTLIPS Pizza, Looptworks, Neil Kelly, ¿Por Qué No? and The Joinery—stand with New Seasons in calling for community-wide solutions and public policies that set higher minimum wages for all Oregonians

(Portland, OR) — New Seasons Market's CEO Wendy Collie today announced New Seasons' support for a statewide increase to Oregon's minimum wage in 2016.

"We believe raising the minimum wage in Oregon is the right thing to do for our staff and our communities, to ensure everyone can thrive in the communities where they live and work," said Collie.

New Seasons, with over 3,300 staff members, is the largest local employer to step forward in support of increasing the minimum wage in Oregon.

Although the businesses have not endorsed a specific ballot measure or legislative proposal, Collie defined several aspects of the policy direction they support.

"A higher minimum wage policy needs to meet the needs of our staff, our customers and the communities we serve, to ensure sustainable businesses and the vitality of our economy as a whole," said Collie.

New Seasons Market supports policy choices that phase in the wage increases, as has been done in Seattle and San Francisco, so companies can build them into their budgets in a sustainable fashion. Minimum wage phase-ins should also account for the economic differences of small and large employers.

Collie continued, "We need a higher minimum wage that works for rural producers and that supports the sustainable food economy for which we are champions. The wage that supports self-sufficiency in urban areas such as Portland could be \$15 per hour, while the differences in cost of living in rural communities could make the same wage unsustainable."

New Seasons Market is joined by several other local businesses, including Grand Central Bakery, HOTLIPS Pizza, Looptworks, Neil Kelly, ¿Por Qué No?, and The Joinery, in calling for state elected leaders to take action in 2016 on a minimum wage policy that meets the needs of Oregon's diverse communities.

"We know that one local business' employee is another's customer - when people are paid more and can afford to buy more, the positive effects are seen throughout the community," said Patrice Stankavich, Human Resources Director for Grand Central Bakery.

New Seasons also announced today that the company will increase their starting wage from \$10 to \$12 per hour in January 2016. New Seasons Market has a strong and progressive benefits and compensation program to build upon. The company has always had an internal starting wage that is higher than the federal and Oregon minimum wages and offers a generous compensation and benefits package; distributing 20 percent of after-tax profits to staff in the form of profit sharing, offering lifestyle scheduling and providing a 20 percent staff discount.

Collie noted that while companies can make strides such as these independently, individual employers like New Seasons Market cannot reasonably move to \$15 per hour on their own. Broader progress will require public policy changes that create a level playing field for business competition while “rising the tide for all ships.”

“For the things we champion – quality of life, sustainable food economy and thriving communities – Oregon needs an increase in the minimum wage,” said Collie. “It needs to be done in the right way, and we are hopeful that the 2016 legislative session will resolve this issue for the state of Oregon.”

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About New Seasons Market

New Seasons Market is the ultimate neighborhood grocery store and a champion for healthy regional food systems. Beginning in 2000 with a single Portland store, today it runs 17 stores company-wide –16 New Seasons Markets in Oregon and Southwest Washington, and one store in San Jose, Calif. It also owns and operates five New Leaf Community Markets in Northern California. New Seasons is dedicated to cultivating community and delivering trademark customer service that lives up to its reputation as “the friendliest store in town.” Its stores offer a wide array of local organic produce at season’s peak, humanely raised meats from animals fed or finished on a non-GMO diet, sustainably harvested seafood, Oregon Tilth Certified Organic artisan breads, handmade freshly prepared foods and unique, artisanal local finds alongside favorite classic brands. It’s also a leader in sustainability, progressive employment and giving back to community, donating 10 percent of after-tax profits to local nonprofits and community organizations. As a result of its mission-driven approach, New Seasons became the first grocer in the world to become a certified B Corporation, which recognizes companies committed to using the power of business for good, taking as much care of staff, community and environment as they do their business.