



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**May 20, 2014**

**Motion 14131**

**Proposed No. 2014-0058.3**

**Sponsors Dembowski, Phillips and Gossett**

1           A MOTION addressing income inequality with the  
2           establishment and implementation of a living wage policy  
3           for King County.

4           WHEREAS, King County's policies are designed to foster and promote a healthy  
5           economic environment for individual county residents and their families, including jobs  
6           and wages that are sufficient to support a family, and

7           WHEREAS, one of the stated objectives toward achieving the goal of Economic  
8           Growth and Built Environment under the King County Strategic Plan is to "support a  
9           strong, diverse, and sustainable economy," and

10          WHEREAS, one of the stated indicators of whether that objective has been  
11          attained is the "percent of jobs paying a living wage," and

12          WHEREAS, according to The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State  
13          2011, a report prepared for the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County,  
14          the Washington state minimum wage is insufficient to meet the basic needs of working  
15          families. Specifically, the current minimum wage for Washington state, which is \$9.32  
16          per hour as of April 2014, is less than the 2011 "self-sufficiency standard" by between  
17          twelve percent and seventy-three percent, depending on the number of adults and  
18          children in the family and the family's specific location within King County, and

19 WHEREAS, employees who are paid less than a living wage are more likely to be  
20 eligible for and rely upon government programs for assistance, including programs such  
21 as subsidized food, housing, health care, bus fare and utilities, resulting in an indirect and  
22 unwarranted taxpayer subsidy to their employers, and

23 WHEREAS, according to a December 2013 report by the Alliance for a Just  
24 Society, a national network of twelve racial and economic justice organizations:

25 1. The Washington state minimum wage, which is \$9.32 per hour as of January  
26 2014, is:

27 a. forty-two percent less than a living wage for a single adult; the report defines  
28 living wage as a wage that allows families to meet their basic needs without public  
29 assistance and that provides them some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead;

30 b. fifty-eight percent less than a living wage for a single adult with a school-age  
31 child aged six through eight years;

32 c. sixty-nine percent less than a living wage for a single adult with a toddler  
33 aged twelve through twenty-four months and a school-age child;

34 d. sixty-nine percent less than a living wage for two adults, with one working  
35 and with a toddler and a school-age child; and

36 e. fifty-three percent less than a living wage for two adults, with both working  
37 and with a toddler and a school-age child;

38 2. The percentage of all job openings paying less than a living wage in  
39 Washington state in 2012 was: forty-one percent for a household consisting of a single  
40 adult; sixty-one percent for a single adult with one child; seventy-eight for a single adult

41 with two children; and eighty percent for two adults, with one working, with two  
42 children;

43 3. The percentage of United States jobs that pay less than \$15 per hour increased  
44 from 36.55 percent in 2009 to 39.45 percent in 2012, reaching a total of 51.4 million in  
45 2012; and

46 4. The number of jobs in occupational categories with median wages above \$15  
47 per hour dropped by four million from 2009 to 2012, masked by an increase of 3.6  
48 million jobs with median wages below \$15 an hour, and

49 WHEREAS, according to the Economic Policy Institute, from the 1940s to the  
50 1970s, real hourly compensation of production/nonsupervisory workers increased at  
51 roughly the same rate as worker productivity, but between 1973 and 2011, while  
52 productivity increased by about eighty percent, median real hourly compensation  
53 increased by only about eleven percent, and

54 WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, minimum wage workers  
55 are disproportionately women and people of color, and it is an aim of King County's  
56 equity and social justice initiative to eliminate such disparities, and

57 WHEREAS, many of those working in King County are having trouble meeting  
58 their basic needs in light of stagnating wages, while the cost of living continues to grow,  
59 and

60 WHEREAS, according to the National Employment Law Project, legislation  
61 requiring employers to pay a living wage has been adopted in more than one hundred  
62 twenty-five cities and counties across the nation, including about half of the twenty-five  
63 largest cities by population, but King County, the thirteenth-largest county in the nation,

64 has no living wage policy for its contractors and others doing business with or receiving  
65 benefits from King County, and

66 WHEREAS, the council seeks to explore the advisability of adopting a living  
67 wage ordinance to advance the county's strategic objectives of "support[ing] a strong,  
68 diverse, and sustainable economy" and promoting equity and social justice.

69 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

70 A. It is the policy of King County that a living wage should be paid to county  
71 employees and to the employees of persons, businesses, organizations and other entities  
72 that receive procurement contracts, tax exemptions or credits, or other financial benefits  
73 from the county.

74 B. To explore the policy implications of implementing the living wage policy set  
75 forth in subsection A of this motion, the council asks the county executive to make  
76 written recommendations to the council suggesting provisions that should or should not  
77 be included in an ordinance implementing the living wage policy and requests the  
78 assistance of the county executive in assessing the costs, benefits and other consequences  
79 of adopting a living wage ordinance setting a minimum level of compensation for all  
80 county employees and for the employees of persons, businesses, organizations and other  
81 entities receiving or applying for county procurement contracts, county tax exemptions or  
82 credits or other financial benefits from King County. In particular, the council asks the  
83 executive to provide to the council, no later than June 13, 2014, a report that includes:

84 1. A list, by classification, not name, of all county employees who are being  
85 compensated at a rate lower than fifteen dollars per hour (excluding benefits), including

86 each employee's rate of compensation and the county department and division in which  
87 he or she is employed;

88 2. A list of all contracts the county currently has with non-government entities,  
89 in an amount greater than \$25,000, for the provision of goods or services to the county or  
90 to third parties, excluding employment and labor agreements. The list should include the  
91 name of the entity, the term of the agreement, a brief description of the goods or services  
92 and the total amount of all the required payments;

93 3. A list of all nongovernment entities that have received or are expected to  
94 receive tax exemptions or credits or other financial benefits from the county in a total  
95 amount greater than \$25,000, except for those required under state or federal law,  
96 including the name of the entity, a brief description of the exemption, credit or other  
97 benefit, and the dollar amount; and

98 4. Such other information as the executive would like the council to include in  
99 its consideration of whether to adopt a living wage ordinance or as the council or its staff  
100 may subsequently request.

101 C. The policy stated in section A. of this motion is not intended to apply to other  
102 general purpose governments, such as the federal government, state governments or other  
103 counties, cities or towns, receiving or applying for: county procurement or other  
104 contracts; county tax exemptions or credits; or other financial benefits from King County.

105 D. The report requested in section B. of this motion should be submitted in the  
106 form of a paper original and an electronic copy to the clerk of the council, who shall  
107 retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief  
108 of staff, the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its

109 successor, and the council's legislative analyst primarily assigned to labor relations  
110 issues.

111 E. This motion is not intended to direct the county's bargaining agents in their  
112 negotiation of labor agreements.  
113

Motion 14131 was introduced on 2/3/2014 and passed as amended by the Metropolitan King County Council on 5/19/2014, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Mr. Phillips, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Hague,  
Ms. Lambert, Mr. Dunn, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Dembowski and Mr.  
Upthegrove  
No: 0  
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Larry Phillips, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

**Attachments:** None