The Massachusetts State Senate passed a bill that boosts the minimum wage from $8.00 to $9.00, and an additional dollar each year until 2016, up to $11.00; after that, the rate will increase automatically to keep pace with inflation. It is unclear when the Massachusetts House will take up the legislation. Republican lawmakers oppose minimum wage increase. They contend that such an increase – from $8.00 an hour to $11.00 – would hurt job growth, small businesses, and economic growth. Nonetheless, President Obama and Democrats continued to push for this bill to get passed by the end of July, 2014. A referendum has been issued to increase the minimum wage to $10.50, not $11.00, yet Representative Antonio Cabral continues to push for $11.00.

**The Bill**

*H.1701, An Act to improve the Commonwealth’s economy with a strong minimum wage*

**Storybook Excerpt**

Joseph, a Chelsea resident, is the father of two five-year-old children. Joseph is employed at Boston Common Coffee located in Downtown Boston. Due to his minimum-wage salary, Joseph has struggled to financially support his family during the recession. As a result, he must work two jobs to pay for the necessities. When asked about the potential $11 minimum wage, Joseph responded, “The minimum wage today does not a feed a family of four. This change would help me worry less about my family while at work. Also, I would be motivated to work harder without the distractions of financial problems at home.”

**Excerpt from Campaign Journals**

*Michael*

On March 26th, 2014, Harold and I attended the Raise Up Massachusetts pep rally outside the Massachusetts State House to voice our support of the initiative.
I quickly learned the value of social integration through the rally. The large masses of supporters, led by Lewis Finfer, continued growing through the event because the rally captured the attention of nearby bystanders, almost inviting them to join. One at a time, citizens spoke at the podium sharing their personal stories with passion demonstrating the need to raise the minimum wage. I specifically remember one woman, discussing her teenage daughter with cancer, leaving a powerful imprint on the crowd because she could not provide for her family due to the current minimum wage. Her message provided motivation to the crowd to ignore the cold conditions to continue voicing our opinions.

Once arriving at the rally, I immediately felt the camaraderie because everyone shared a common interest which allowed many strangers to quickly join forces to form one voice in unison. I experienced a ‘pull’ towards the event even though frigid weather attempted to dismantle the rally. The activists’ response to the adverse weather illustrated their unquestionable conviction to achieve their goal. Suffering through the conditions, hundreds of activists marched through the streets for hours leading chants specifically targeting an increase for tipped workers. Simply raising the minimum wage was not enough; tipped workers had to be accounted for too.

I experienced a new form of advocating for policy change which was truly special. In the past, I had only met with representatives, senators and aides in a professional setting; however, the opportunity to hear Massachusetts citizens fight for themselves made the largest impact of my journey.

**Update**

Bill H.1701 passed, and was signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick on June 26, 2014. By January 2017, Massachusetts will have the highest state minimum wage in the country, at $11.00 per hour.

**For more information**

**Raise Up Massachusetts**

http://yeson4ma.org/