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St. Louis City Circuit Court Rules Against Minimum Wage Increase

OCTOBER 16, 2015 | NEWS

Spencer Fane is pleased to announce that St. Louis City Circuit Court Judge Steven Ohmer ruled in favor of the firm's clients in a high-profile minimum wage dispute that has gained national attention. Judge Ohmer declared that the city's recent minimum wage increase is "unenforceable as in conflict" with state law, striking down the city's plan to raise the local minimum wage to \$8.25 per hour on Oct. 15 and \$11 per hour by 2018.

A coalition of business organizations and small companies filed a lawsuit against the city and city officials in protest of the minimum wage increase, contending that the state minimum wage law passed in 2006 authorizes Missouri employers to pay the state minimum wage, and any local ordinance that seeks to supersede the state law is invalid. The ruling came on Oct. 14, just hours before the ordinance was to take effect the following day.

"We're very pleased with the court's outcome and consider the ruling to be a tremendous victory for our local, small business community," said Jane Dueker, Spencer Fane attorney and lead counsel on the case. "While our clients certainly appreciate the good intentions of a higher minimum wage, the mandatory increase is in direct conflict with our state laws and, if in place, would actually hurt the same people it is intended to help as it would reduce the number of people small businesses would employ."

The court's decision in St. Louis mirrors a recent outcome across the state in which the Jackson County Circuit Court found the City Council of Kansas City's minimum wage increase to also be in violation of state law and "therefore unconstitutional, on its face." The Kansas City Council had attempted to enact an ordinance which would have increased the minimum wage to \$13 an hour by 2020.

Jane Dueker was joined by fellow Spencer Fane attorneys Thomas Hayde and Arthur Gregg in her representation of the plaintiffs on the case against the City of St. Louis.