CalFire lobbies for more than minimum wage

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee
While state firefighters have battled the epic King Fire west of Lake Tahoe, their union has been struggling with a political question: What can they expect financially in the future from Gov. Jerry Brown?
CalFire is in the midst of voting on an agreement with Brown to amend the union's current contract. The deal gives most members a 4 percent raise Jan. 1. Meanwhile, some of the lowest-paid firefighters are receiving a 12.5 percent salary hike.

The smaller increase is in line with Brown's policy that no union would get an across-the-board pay raise larger than the one he negotiated last year with the mammoth SEIU Local 1000. The larger percentage raise was prompted by – get this – the latest increase in California's minimum wage.

Employees in the Firefighter I classification earned as little as $8 per hour, a dollar less than the state minimum wage that went into effect July 1. The 12.5 percent increase fixes that for now, and the contract amendment under consideration grants another 12.5 percent raise next year, ahead of the state's hourly minimum going to $10 in 2016. Some fast-food workers earn more.

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