

\$13/hour Nevada wage plan moves forward

By Associated Press

CARSON CITY – Supporters of a proposal to gradually raise Nevada's hourly minimum wage to \$13 are clear to start gathering the thousands of signatures needed to get the measure on the November ballot.

Carson City District Judge James Wilson sided with supports of hiking the minimum wage on Wednesday and ruled that the petition language doesn't need to be changed. The measure is backed by a group called the Committee to Raise the Minimum Wage in Nevada.

Opponents included Las Vegas and Reno-Sparks chambers of commerce, who sought to disqualify the petition on technical points. They argued that the petition language doesn't explain the harsh consequences in store for businesses that violate the wage rule, even by accident.

Opposition lawyer Kevin Benson told the newspaper he's not sure yet whether his clients will appeal the judge's ruling to the Nevada Supreme Court.

Nevada's minimum wage is \$8.25 an hour, or \$7.25 if an employer offers health insurance. The measure would raise the rate to \$9.25 in late 2018, then increase it by 75 cents each year until it reaches \$13 in 2024.

The measure proposes that all subsequent minimum wage hikes in Nevada be tied to growth in the federal rate or to a cost-of-living index. It would also remove the lower-tier minimum wage rate for employers who offer insurance, and it would cut out a measure that exempts teenagers from minimum wage rules if they're working for nonprofits on a short-term basis.

Backers must gather more than 55,000 signatures to put the proposal on November's ballot.

Officers on the ballot measure committee include the Rev. Neal Anderson of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Nevada, who said in November that the measure was about lifting families from poverty, bringing wages in line with increasing costs and affirming human dignity.

Opponents of raising the minimum wage say it would hurt entry-level workers, whose jobs would be replaced by automation and whose employers would go out of business.

The proposal is more modest than the \$15 an hour sought by fast food workers who have been staging strikes in Las Vegas and elsewhere. It comes after a bill that would have raised the state's minimum wage to \$9 died at the end of this spring's legislative session, and after a proposed constitutional amendment raising the wage to \$15 made even less progress.