

A FLORIDA STATE REP. TRIED TO LIVE ON MINIMUM WAGE IN MIAMI AND QUICKLY FAILED



Workers demand fair wages outside McDonald's.

Photo by Steve Rhodes, Creative Commons license

Just two days into an experiment to experience daily life on minimum wage in Miami, Florida Rep. Jose Javier Rodriguez says he failed the test.

Tuesday morning, Rodriguez planned to take the bus from his home in Shenandoah to his downtown office. But after waiting 30 minutes for a bus to arrive, Rodriguez gave up and got a ride.

"I had based my timing on the online schedule, but I was there waiting," he says. "And then finally I got a ride downtown because I had to be at the courthouse."

Rodriguez is among 18 legislators across the state who are taking SEIU's **Minimum Wage Challenge** to live on \$8.05 an hour for five days. State Sen. Dwight Bullard from Miami is also taking part. Participants receive \$85 per week – or \$17 per day – for all expenses, excluding housing, car payments, credit card bills, and childcare.

"People living on the minimum wage would have showed up late and gotten chewed out by their boss or gotten up earlier," Rodriguez says of his experience. "Either way, the commute takes three times as long as it should, and that's less time with family."

An Uber ride, he estimates, would have cost around \$16. "That's two hours of work," he says. "If you're on minimum wage, that isn't possible."





Rep José J Rodríguez
@JoseJavierJJR

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Day 2 #MinimumWage challenge: missed the bus, next one was over 20 mins late so I had to find a ride #SeFueLaGuagua

1:04 PM - 29 Sep 2015

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Rodríguez and other Democratic lawmakers are pushing for legislation that would double the minimum wage over the next few years in Florida. Two \$15-minimum-wage bills – SB6 and HB109 – call for an increase to the state’s current minimum wage from \$8.05 to \$15 an hour, which has been adopted as a standard in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as for fast-food workers in New York state and home-care workers in Massachusetts.

On Monday, Rodríguez – accompanied by a man and woman who work at McDonald’s and earn the minimum wage – went grocery shopping at El Libanes Supermarket in Little Havana. He bought household staples such as toilet paper, eggs, milk, and juice.

Rodríguez admits the exercise is symbolic, designed simply to draw awareness to the challenges of living on minimum wage.

“Clearly, this is just an exercise,” Rodríguez says. “None of us are missing our mortgage payments.”



Rep José J Rodríguez
@JoseJavierJJR

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Day 1 #MinimumWage challenge, shopping on budget of someone working all year full-time, still below the poverty level

8:58 AM - 28 Sep 2015

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