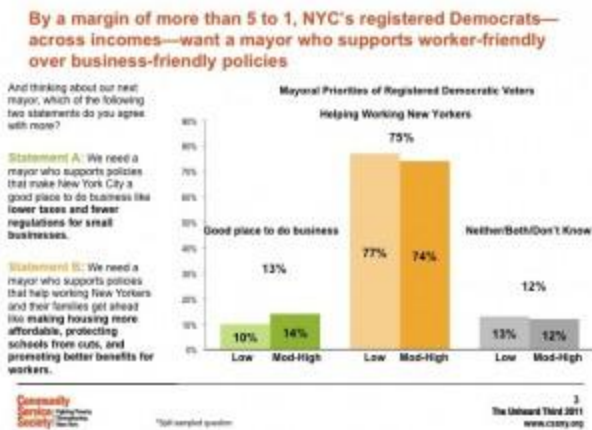




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Voters Want A Mayor Who Backs Living Wage, Survey Says



By [Laura Nahmias](#)

A majority of New York Democrats would vote against a mayoral candidate who opposed paid sick leave and a living wage, according to a new survey to be released today.

Fifty-six percent of all voters said they would vote against a candidate for mayor who opposed those policies, while 62 percent of Democrats said they would pull the lever for someone else. These figures could present a problem for Council Speaker Christine Quinn, who scuttled a paid sick leave bill and has avoided taking a public position on a living wage bill in advance of her assumed candidacy for mayor in 2013.

The survey, entitled “The Jobs Crisis and Low-income New Yorkers: Impact and implications for 2013 city elections,” was conducted by the Community Service Society (CSS), a 150-year-old anti-poverty non-profit that supports both paid sick leave and a living wage.

The survey runs counter to a common refrain from both Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. Andrew Cuomo: that growing the economy can only be accomplished through spending cuts and increased economic incentives for businesses.

“People don’t buy that argument,” said Nancy Rankin, vice president for policy research and advocacy at CSS. “Giving tax breaks or dropping regulations is not going to fix it. What we need to do is stimulate the economy, so that people feel secure about spending.”

Those measures are not among most voters' top priorities for the city's next mayor, however. The vast majority of those surveyed listed job creation as their top priority, while investing in education came in second. "Making the city more attractive to business" came in second to last, followed by "promoting policies like living wage and paid sick days."

Increasing affordable housing ranked higher than keeping spending low and taxes down. Sixty-eight percent of respondents said affordable housing and increased worker benefits should be the next mayor's top priority compared to 18 percent who claimed lowering taxes and lessening regulations for businesses should take precedence.

The survey, which polled roughly 1,500 people and was taken over three weeks in July, predates the Occupy Wall Street movement and the recent push for the living wage bill, which would require companies on city-subsidized projects to pay higher wages. The City Council is scheduled to hold a hearing on the living wage bill today.

The survey takes specific aim at the growing field of mayoral candidates over whether they support increased spending on schools, infrastructure and worker benefits like the paid sick leave bill. Quinn has infuriated progressives who had hoped she would support paid sick leave and the living wage bill. City Comptroller John Liu, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer – all potential mayoral candidates in 2013 – have expressed support for both bills.

The measure was opposed by Bloomberg, who threatened to veto a bill if it passed the Council, on grounds it would kill jobs. Business-backed studies contended the bill would have cost the city more than \$8.8 billion, while groups like the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a supporter of the bill, estimate its cost to be much lower, at \$332 million per year.

"What's striking is how many people strongly support this," Rankin said, noting paid sick leave had majority support across all income groups and political party affiliations. "Almost no one is strongly opposed to this."

The survey, funded in part by the New York Community Trust, also illustrates the extent to which New Yorkers feel economically insecure. More than a third of low-income respondents said they had lost wages or jobs in the past year. More than a quarter of middle- and high-income residents said they'd lost wages too.