



The

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

MARCH 2016

Dear Residents and Stakeholders:

East Orange continues to stand at the forefront of national issues that benefit the hard-working families who make our community strong.

In September 2014, we became the fourth in the state and the eighth in the nation to mandate earned paid sick leave. This ordinance was fully supported by the East Orange Chamber of Commerce, which is the first and quite possibly the only chamber of commerce in the nation to back such an important initiative. Today, anyone who works in our city does not have to choose between a paycheck and their health. That's progress.

In January 2016, my administration, with the support of the East Orange City Council, ratified a new contract agreement with the Communication Workers of America Local 1077 to raise municipal hourly wages to \$15 an hour. From the crossing guards who keep our children safe to the part-time laborers who maintain our infrastructure, we created a solution to ensure that the people working for the City of East Orange can make a livable wage and take care of their families.

“ This agreement makes us the first city in New Jersey to demonstrate our steadfast support for smart labor negotiations designed to strengthen working families and bolster our shrinking middle class. Simply put, we put our money where our mouth is. I encourage other communities to do the same. ”

In cities much like East Orange, men and women are working 40 or more hours a week, only to struggle to make ends meet. An adult full-time worker in New Jersey needs at least \$13.78 an hour, or \$28,662 annually, just to afford essential needs such as food, clothes and shelter. The current minimum wage of \$8.38 an hour is no longer enough to sustain a family.

Our pledge to support working families is being echoed across the state, where calls for increasing the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour are being heard loud and clear. Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3) and Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto (D-36) recently announced that they will sponsor an effort to raise New Jersey's minimum wage to \$15 an hour over the next few years.

Locally, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders was the first in the state to pass a resolution in support of increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. We realize that raising the minimum wage to a livable wage is not a fix-all solution to the economic crisis we are in, but it's a solid start. I respect the collective bargaining process and support legislation that will benefit everyone who works in our great city.

Just as we have advocated for our municipal workers, we are continuing to build upon our partnerships to expand job opportunities so that all of our residents can earn a livable wage. On Friday, March 4, 2016 the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training will host our 2nd Career Day for Construction Trades between 10am-12pm at the East Orange Senior Center. Interested participants will be connected with representatives to learn about job opportunities on the nearly \$250 million of revitalization projects currently happening in our city.

Recently, President Barack Obama announced a "Summer Opportunity Project" to give young people access to their first job and to close the opportunity gap that has pervaded our communities of color for far too long. While East Orange has nearly doubled its network of businesses in the last two years, I am proud to announce that we will be partnering with the White House via the LinkedIn Summer Opportunity Initiative to further enhance our recruiting efforts for this upcoming summer. The kick-off for our Summer Work Employment Program (S.W.E.P.) will be held at 10am on Saturday, April 9, 2016 at Cicely Tyson School and I encourage all students to come and learn of the many employment opportunities available right here in the city.

Please stay tuned for details on an upcoming Senior Employment Program and Job Fair designed to make connections between seasoned job seekers and employers.

As we embark upon a new season, let us be renewed in our united efforts to make East Orange a great place to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

Mayor Lester E. Taylor III