



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 3, 2017

Seattle Mayor Ordered Rushed, Biased Report to “Prove” \$15 Minimum-wage Success

In a preemptive strike against a report showing that Seattle’s recent minimum-wage hike had harmed the very people it was supposed to help, Seattle’s Democratic Mayor Ed Murray conspired with a University of California, Berkeley, economist to release a study supposedly proving just the opposite.



[E-mails](#) obtained by the Employment Policies Institute (EPI), which opposed the increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, demonstrate that Murray’s office ordered the favorable report, issued by Berkeley’s Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, rushed into publication ahead of the unfavorable report, issued by the University of Washington (UW).

The city council, which had commissioned the years-long UW study, was briefed on its findings in advance of its publication. As [The New American](#) reported after that study was released, it gave council members “results they didn’t want to hear: Their efforts to raise wages of the city’s lowest-paid workers are instead costing them about \$125 a month.” In addition, researchers found that the minimum-wage hike had actually prevented 5,000 low-wage jobs from coming into existence.

The mayor’s office, obviously hoping to get good news (whether genuine or not) out first, forwarded the draft of the UW report to the Berkeley team, headed by economist Dr. Michael Reich, a founding member of the socialist Union for Radical Political Economics and a longtime proponent of minimum-wage increases. [Fox News](#) obtained e-mails showing that “Reich was given a deadline by Murray. His work was to be completed just before the University of Washington team announced its results.”

Indeed, Reich himself admitted in the EPI-obtained e-mails that he had scurried to meet Murray’s deadline. In a June 18 e-mail to the mayor’s office that included a copy of his report, Reich wrote, “Hope it’s in time for your Tuesday event.” In an e-mail to the Berkeley press shop, he explained, “Sorry for the extremely short notice. I’ve been working morning to evening every one of the past seven days to complete this. The timetable moved up over the weekend.”

Since the purpose of Reich’s report was to discredit the UW report, it was only natural that it should refer to that report. Murray’s office did not approve, wanting to keep the UW study out of the public eye as much as possible. “Leave the critique of the UW study until later,” mayoral staffer Carlo Caldirola-Davis told Reich in an e-mail. “The [press] release still calls out the UW study. Don’t want your positive news to serve as a teaser for the UW study.”

Reich agreed to remove the references to the UW study, saying he was “convinced.”



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Meanwhile, to get the word out about his report, Reich sent a press release to the Berkeley press shop and Murray's office. According to EPI's [Michael Saltsman](#), "This release was authored by Daniel Massey of the PR firm BerlinRosen, who also handles media and has acted as a spokesperson for the [pro-wage hike] Fight for \$15. Reich also looped in Paul Sonn from the union-supported, pro-\$15 National Employment Law Project (NELP) for his feedback. (The Berkeley team has closely coordinated with Sonn and NELP on past minimum wage testimony and media work.)"

Reich's report, compiled in mere months using a limited data set, was released a week ahead of UW's and, not surprisingly, came to radically different conclusions, namely that the minimum-wage hike had boosted wages in the food-service industry without affecting employment in that industry.

"These emails are further proof that the Berkeley team is motivated by ideology, not evidence," Saltsman told the [Washington Free Beacon](#). "The contrast with the University of Washington team is not a flattering one: While Berkeley rushed its results to meet a political timeline, the UW team took its time to solicit scholarly feedback to refine its results."

In the end, he argued in a [Forbes post](#), "This poorly-conceived attempt to undermine the [UW] report has backfired: Instead of bolstering the Mayor's desired conclusion about \$15, it has instead highlighted the real consequences of the policy. It has also hurt the scholarly credibility of the Berkeley team, reinforcing the perception of a for-hire research unit that's never met a wage increase it didn't like."

Photo of Ed Murray: [Seattle.gov](#)



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