

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD  
BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE WAGE BOARD**

**ON**

**Raising the Tipped Minimum Wage**

**November 13, 2014**

**Ron Toms**

**OWNER – Rontoms Lounge**

My name is Ron Toms. It is my privilege to address the members of the New York State Wage Board on this issue as the owner of Rontoms Lounge in Oregon.

From firsthand experience as an Oregon restaurant owner and operator, I can assure you that I am able to manage a successful business in a state without a tipped sub-minimum wage, *and* I encourage the Governor of New York to issue a “wage order” that would end this outdated practice in order to improve the lives of food service employees, restaurant owners, and their local communities.

I started Rontoms Lounge about 8 years ago. In that time, I’ve built a business from scratch that now employs 20 part-time, and 5 full-time staff. If my restaurant was in New York 18 of my employees would be considered food service workers and therefore I would only be required to pay them \$5 per hour. However, I gladly pay everyone in my restaurant at least the Oregon minimum wage of \$9.10 per hour.

A minimum wage of \$9.10 per hour has not prevented me from hiring staff and expanding my business. Since I started my business in 2006 I’ve continued to hire in order to meet growing business while also investing in tenant improvements which facilitated additional growth. We now have space for 380 customers and do a respectable amount of annual revenue.

As a business owner, all of my employees are important to me. They work hard to make money for my restaurant and they should be compensated appropriately by my restaurant. Providing a fair and equal minimum wage for my tipped employees gives them a steady income that they can rely on even during slow shifts, and off-season.

Additionally, I know my staff frequently eat out in other local restaurants, and hospitality staff from those restaurants are customers at Rontoms. The more money food service staff have in their pockets, the more customers I have.

As a restaurant manager, I appreciate that my staff seem happier than I did when I made under \$3 hr as a server in Ohio. They’re happier because they take home a fair paycheck twice a month, unlike the weekly checks I deposited for less than \$1 because the rest of my earnings paid for taxes. They’re also less likely to quit because they aren’t making enough money. Lower turnover means spending less time and money training staff.

Again, I encourage the state of New York to eliminate its' sub-minimum wage for food service employees.

Thank you,

Ron Toms

Owner

Rontoms Lounge

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