Community, Union and Social Justice Leaders Call for Nation’s Most Comprehensive Living Wage Ordinance
Taxpayer dollars should not be used to create poverty-level jobs

SAN JOSE, Calif. – A new economic report released today lays out a promising pathway for the County of Santa Clara to lead with the most comprehensive living wage ordinance in the country. The report comes as the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors considers an ordinance that would require its contractors to pay employees a living wage and offer a host of other job standard improvements. The legislation would cover only entities that do business with the county.

The need is clear: “28 percent of all jobs in the county do not pay a living wage; and 35 percent of all working households have incomes below the basic self-sufficiency standard, according to the report “Setting Job Standards for a New Economy: An Innovative Living Wage for Silicon Valley.”

Of more than 140 government jurisdictions that have enacted living wage policies, the report from Working Partnerships, USA shows that Santa Clara County is primed to be the leader in creating an ordinance that moves the region to higher job standards for a new economy.

“At a time when many employers show far more concern for their investors and their customers than their workers, the County can define what it means to provide a good job,” said Ben Field, Executive Officer of the South Bay Labor Council, a strong advocate of the proposed law.

Derecka Mehrens, Executive Director of Working Partnerships USA, which developed the report said: “We hope other Silicon Valley employers will follow the example of our county government and help bring back jobs that sustain families and sustain our communities.”

The County’s largest employee union, Service Employees International Union Local 521, has also worked tirelessly to advocate for the proposed law. “With the economic divide in our country at a historic high, unions like SEIU are stepping up our advocacy for all workers, not just those we represent or organize,” said Luisa Blue, Chief Elected Officer of SEIU Local 521.
A living wage is different than a minimum wage. A living wage ordinance is a standard, not a floor, for what workers must earn to be self-sufficient, and it only applies to businesses that contract with a governmental body. A minimum wage applies to all businesses in a jurisdiction, similar to the $10 minimum wage that passed in San Jose in 2012.

The full report is available online at www.wpusa.org.
See related videos at including a local worker challenging County Supervisors to try to survive on his salary. Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese took the challenge. To see their videos, visit: www.svlivingwage.com