

April 7, 2021
Public Comment, Special Meeting, Agenda Item 9
Regarding: Hero Pay for Retail Workers in South Pasadena

On January 20, 2021, the Council approved a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Cacciotti for staff to draft an ordinance providing hero pay to our city's retail workers. On April 7, 2021, staff is seeking the Council's guidance regarding whether to move forward with an urgency ordinance for hazard pay.

In other jurisdictions around California, cities and counties are moving ahead with hazard pay for retail workers. The cities of **Long Beach, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Montebello, West Hollywood, Palm Springs, Irvine, Coachella, Oakland, Berkeley, San Jose, and San Francisco** have enacted hazard pay ordinances, as has the **County of Los Angeles** for unincorporated areas, to compensate retail workers for the added risks burdening them during the pandemic.

The momentum behind local hazard pay ordinances grew out of congressional stalemate and **brehtaking profits by major retailers**. According to the Brookings Institution, in 2020 retailers averaged 40% profit increases compared to 2019.¹ Brookings found that in 2020, **Kroger's profits were up 90%, up \$962 million** from 2019.² **Albertsons' profits were up 153% over the previous year, from \$344 million to \$871 million.**³

Meanwhile, economic insecurity for workers is high and retail workers risk coronavirus infection each day they work. Some retailers offered hazard pay early in the pandemic, and some, including Trader Joe's,⁴ are still paying a modest wage premium. The Brookings Institution report found that, when available, hazard pay makes a meaningful difference for low-wage retail workers, particularly for women and people of color. The authors determined that **retailers could increase the amount of hazard pay they offer substantially while still earning record profits.**⁵

South Pasadena should not retreat from good policy in fear of the grocery associations' intimidation tactics to beat back local ordinances. On February 25, a federal district court denied the California Grocers Association's motion for a preliminary injunction to temporarily overturn the Long Beach hero pay ordinance. Kroger's decision to close two retail locations in Long Beach has been widely pilloried as retaliation against essential workers. In sum, **the grocery associations are coming up short in courts of law and public opinion.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has infected and killed Black and Latinx Americans at vastly disproportionate rates. The pandemic's racial and ethnic disparities are caused, in part, by the

¹ Kinder, Molly, et al. *Windfall Profits and Deadly Risks: How the biggest retail companies are compensating essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Brookings Institution. November 2020. Available online at <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/windfall-profits-and-deadly-risks/>

² Kroger's is the parent corporation of Ralph's.

³ Albertson's is the parent corporation of Vons.

⁴ Trader Joe's announced it is cancelling annual raises because it is offering hazard pay.

⁵ Kinder, Molly, et al. *supra* n. 1.

heightened risk of infection to essential workers, such as grocery store workers who are more likely to be Black and Latinx.⁶

Here in South Pasadena, residents enjoy lower rates of COVID-19 transmission and higher rates of vaccination than the County average.⁷ Residents also benefit from the convenience of six grocery options from major retailers within our city's three-and-a-half square miles, which have been open continuously throughout the pandemic. As South Pasadena addresses its history as a sundown town, it must consider concrete measures to remedy racial inequities affecting people who work here for low wages. Requiring retailers to give a modest pay bump to the workers who assist South Pasadenans every day is one such concrete measure the city can take.^{8,9}

We urge South Pasadena to put teeth behind its widespread yard signs thanking essential workers for their service. ***Agendize an urgency hazard pay ordinance for the April 21 City Council meeting.***

Signed,

1. Sean Abajian
2. Alana Adye-Jones
3. Jennifer Alano
4. Ahilan Arulanantham
5. Alexander Aquino
6. Martin AuYeung
7. Anne Bagasao
8. Dr. Paula Bagasao
9. Kerrie Barbato
10. Matthew Barbato
11. Chris Becker
12. Robin Becker
13. Sierra Betinis
14. Katrina Bleckley
15. Erin Bonz
16. Felicie Borredon
17. Laurent Borredon
18. Jessica Bradford
19. Matthew Brown
20. Colin Burgess
21. Tony Butka
22. Ivan Cabrera
23. Julie Chen
24. Beth Clendenin
25. Emily Clone
26. Janna Conner-Niclaes
27. Laura Copeland
28. Shari Correll
29. Melinda Creps
30. Isa D'Arleans
31. Matthew Defulgentis
32. Steven Anthony Diez Jr.
33. Grace Dennis
34. Audrey Dunville
35. Ava Dunville
36. Nichole Dunville
37. Travis Dunville
38. Frederick Eberhardt
39. Jonathan Eisenberg
40. Richard Elbaum
41. Owen Ellickson
42. Alan Ehrlich
43. Justin Ehrlich
44. Stephanie Ehrlich

⁶ Kinder, Molly, et al., *supra* n. 1.

⁷ Lin, Rong-Gong and Luke Money. "COVID-19 vaccine rates in Brentwood, Santa Monica twice as high as poorer L.A. County areas." *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-02/covid-vaccine-rates-wealthy-la-areas-double-poor-areas>

⁸ Logan, Erin. "Californians broadly back COVID-19 hazard pay, protections for farmworkers, poll finds." *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-23/latino-and-indigenous-californians-are-disproportionately-impacted-by-covid-19>

⁹ Kinder, Molly, et al. *supra* n. 1.

45. Sarah Erlich
46. Judy Evind
47. Tzung-lin Fu
48. Noel Garcia
49. Lorena Gomez
50. Luca Goodrich
51. Dean Gordon
52. Rachel Hamilton
53. Michelle Hammond
54. Sharon Hannah
55. Marcela Hawk
56. Tanya Henderson
57. Alec Henderson
58. Will Hoadley-Brill
59. Eric Hoffman
60. Tracey Holder
61. Kelly Hom
62. Laboni Hoq
63. Mariana Huerta
64. Che Hurley
65. Ella Hushagen
66. Phung Huynh
67. Lory Ishii
68. Amber Jaeger
69. Sam Jaeger
70. Fahren James
71. Adeline Jasso
72. Marion Johnson
73. Amy Jones
74. Ryan Jones
75. Erin Kalavsky
76. Matt Kalavsky
77. Cassandra Kaldor
78. Dennis Kang
79. Monica Kelly
80. William Kelly
81. Afshin Ketabi
82. JuHee Kim
83. Sunyah Kim
84. Kristen Kuhlman
85. Caitlin Lainoff
86. Casey Law
87. Jessica Law
88. Ahn Leng
89. Laurien Lien
90. Melissa Lien

Jacinta Linke, elected delegate AD41
LACDP
91. Tony Lockhart
92. Sofia Lopez
93. Tiana Lopez
94. Vivian Ly
95. Casey Macgregor-Toshima
96. Elena Mann
97. Jan Marshall
98. Demetra Mazria
99. Grady McFerrin
100. Laura McSharry
101. David Melford
102. Robin Meyer
103. Sean Meyer
104. Julia Moreno Perri
105. Jacob Morris
106. Jenny Muninnopmas
107. Paola Munoz
108. Tudor Munteanu
109. Elizabeth Murillo
110. Andrea Nagata
111. Ayaka Nakaji
112. Anna Nakhienchanh
113. Robyn Nedelcu
114. Katie Neuhoff
115. Anna Newell Brown
116. Raf Niclaes
117. Joanne Nuckols
118. Suzanne Noruschat
119. Carla Obert
120. Gayle Oswald
121. John Oswald
122. Steve Pattenson
123. Chris Patterson
124. Cole Patterson
125. Ry Patterson
126. Victoria Patterson
127. Georgina Paul
128. Kelly Pedersen
129. Sarah Perez-Silverman
130. Sherry Plotkin
131. FJ Pratt
132. Natasha Prime
133. Jose Quiguer
134. Melissa Quilter

135. Myron Dean Quon
136. Alexandra Ramirez
137. Minoli Ratnatunga
138. Eray Rea
139. Zahir Robb
140. Aliza Rood
141. Jason Rosner
142. Shawn Ross
143. Shari Sakamoto
144. Daniel Saunders
145. Allie Schreiner
146. Barrett Schreiner
147. Denise Schulz
148. Gretchen Schulz
149. Andrea Seigel
150. Alexandra Shannon
151. Katherine Siew
152. Glafira Silva
153. Sean Singleton
154. Alison Smith
155. Chris Smith
156. John Srebalus
157. Levi Srebalus
158. Mark Stepro
159. Ryan Stone
160. Nancy Tam
161. Noemie Taylor-Rosner
162. Kathleen Telser
163. Andrew Terhune
164. Cassandra Terhune
165. Amy Tofte
166. Cambria Tortorelli
167. Helen Tran
168. Ciena Valenzuela-Peterson
169. Elizabeth Wendorf
170. Stefani Williams
171. Gwen Wong
172. Kathleen Wong
173. Maya Yahoun
174. Rita Yee
175. Jean Yu