

Numsa rejects the proposed National Minimum Wage Bill

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THE NATIONAL Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) has reiterated its rejection of the proposed National Minimum Wage Bill as deliberations on the bill enter the final leg in Parliament.

The bill, introduced by the Department of Labour, proposes a national minimum wage of R20 per hour. If passed into law, it is expected to increase earnings of more than six million working South Africans.

Numsa acting national spokesperson Phakamile Hlubi-Majola said: "We are very clear that we reject the poverty minimum wage because again this is the government guaranteeing cheap labour. Most companies were very satisfied with the R20 per hour minimum wage because they will pay very low salaries.

"We know that no-one can take their kids to school and access proper healthcare with R20 per hour only. We reject this minimum wage in its entirety," said Hlubi-Majola.

The agreed national minimum wage will compel employers to pay employees R20 per hour, excluding sectors such as farm and domestic workers.

The minimum wage for farm

workers will be R18 per hour and domestic workers R15 per hour. The minimum wage for workers on an Expanded Public Works Programme will be R11 per hour.

The National Council of Provinces is expected today to finalise its deliberation on the controversial bill, including the Labour Laws Amendment Bill, Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Bill, and the Labour Relations Amendment Bill.

The South African Communist Party has, however, thrown its weight behind the proposed bill, saying that it will benefit millions of South Africans.

Start

SACP acting spokesperson Mhlekwana Nxumalo said: "We think this is a good start for us, given the fact that it is going to benefit six million people who are currently earning below the amount that is currently being proposed.

"We know it is not enough and things are getting more expensive on a daily basis but we think it will be wrong for us to reject what is on the table right now. We need to encourage stakeholders, especially business, to keep engaging forward to ensure that what is proposed now will be improved as we move on," said Nxumalo.

The proposed bills will affect workers' right to strike, which is protected under South Africa's Constitution.

The proposed amendments to the Labour Relations Act would introduce measures designed to minimise violent strikes but would also discourage strikes.

Hlubi-Majola said they were not happy with the proposed amendments and would reject them if they're passed in their current form.

"We have been very clear on our position with regard to the changes in the Labour Relation Act.

"We don't believe that the changes are in the interest of the working class majority. One of their proposals was that they want to force all trade union members to balance every time they want to strike," said Hlubi-Majola.

The amendments would also require trade unions to hold secret ballots to decide on strikes.

"That is an attack on the right to strike because it's where you are creating a bureaucratic obstacle, which makes it logistically, financially and physically impossible for us to make a decision to go on strike.

"They are trying to make sure they lessen the number of strikes.

"To do this they will curtail the right to strike," said Hlubi-Majola.