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Letters for week of Sept. 14

Resident: Wage coalition should redirect energy

To the editor:

I watched in wonderment last week as members of the Lawrence Living Wage Coalition vented their frustration to the Lawrence Township Council for "obstructing" the process of establishing a living wage ordinance in Lawrence Township.

I commend the council members for their tolerance in having to absorb insults and misdirected anger. I have to say it is wonderful to see people (especially young people) motivated into action and, from a local perspective, the coalition's effort was successful. However, I blame the leaders of the coalition, especially the representatives of the Brennan Law Center of New York University, for not doing proper due diligence and leading the members of the coalition and those who signed petitions to believe that a municipal government in New Jersey has the authority to set minimum wage.

The hard working people of the Lawrence Living Wage Coalition should learn from this lesson in participatory democracy that for the most part the discretion with setting policy in New Jersey rests with the legislature. Unlike the experiment with initiative and referendum in other states, New Jersey has had the wisdom to hold authority to those we have elected to represent us - our legislature and governor.

I urge the members of the Lawrence Living Wage Coalition to petition the appropriate level of government rather than pursue placing blame on the mayor and council members who clearly do not have this authority. The council and municipal attorney did their job in seeking jurisdiction quite expeditiously. Stop wasting Lawrence tax dollars and redirect your enthusiasm and energy to the correct arena in attempting to accomplish your stated public policy goals.

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