Obama Pushes for More Overtime Pay

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama will direct the Labor Department to strengthen overtime pay protections for millions of workers, a White House official said.

The directive is meant to help salaried workers, such as fast-food shift supervisors or convenience store managers, who may be expected to work more than 40 hours a week without receiving overtime pay. The proposed change is part of Obama's effort to focus on closing the gap between the wealthy and the poor, which also includes a call to raise the federal minimum wage from $7.25 per hour to $10.10.

The proposal is likely to be met with opposition from some Republicans and members of the business community who say the private sector should have flexibility in setting wages.

Under the new changes Obama is seeking, the Labor Department could raise the pay threshold for workers covered by overtime rules. Currently, salaried workers who make more than $455 per week are exempt from overtime.

California and New York have set higher thresholds of $640 and $600 a week respectively, the White House official said.

Obama is expected to announce the proposed regulation changes on Thursday. The announcement is part of his self-described "year of action," a series of economy-focused executive decisions that don't require congressional approval.

The White House official said Obama is authorized to take this action on this own under the Fair Labors Standards Act, which Congress passed in 1938. The proposed changes will be subject to public comment before the Labor Department can start implementing the final rule.

The move was first reported by The New York Times. The official confirmed the announcement on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the directive on the record before the president's announcement.

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