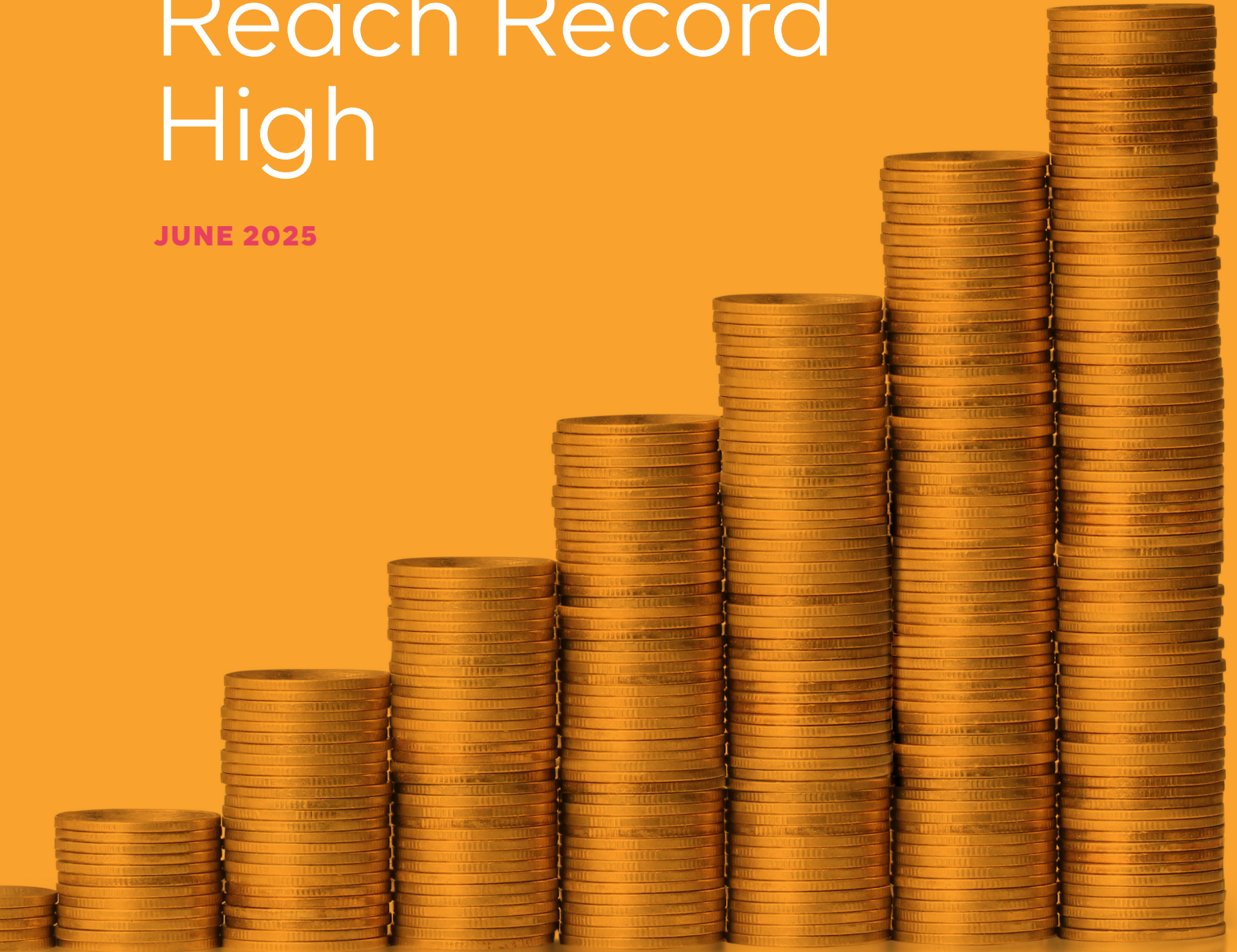


# DC Restaurant Jobs & Tips Reach Record High

JUNE 2025



On November 8, 2022, voters in the District of Columbia overwhelmingly passed Initiative 82 (I-82) with 74% of the vote to raise the minimum wage for tipped workers from a subminimum wage of just \$5.35 per hour to the full minimum wage plus tips over five years, and for it to continue to rise, along with the full minimum wage, with inflation.<sup>1</sup>

In April, One Fair Wage reported that restaurant employment reached its highest point since the pandemic in 2025 while earnings continued to climb.<sup>2</sup> Despite these successes, business interests and their anti-worker



ally, Mayor Muriel Bowser, continue to seek ways to overturn the will of Washington, D.C. voters. One way they try to disrupt democracy is to push false claims that raising wages hurts workers' tips and costs jobs. This anti-worker playbook has been repeated in multiple states based on purposeful misinformation. In fact, the Hoover Institute was forced to retract six articles in 2024 after it was found that their claims of job losses from raising the minimum wage in California were a complete lie — the state actually saw job gains.<sup>3</sup>

Washington, D.C. continues to flourish with wage increases. In fact, employment numbers have no longer just been the best since the pandemic — the last three months have been the highest levels of employment in the industry ever recorded since recordkeeping in D.C. began in 1990. At the

same time, new research reported by CBS News indicates Washington, D.C. residents are the top dining out spenders in the nation and continue to have a strong dining out culture.

As long-term research reminds us, it would be premature to draw conclusions on economic policy while it is still being implemented. Yet, the District of Columbia's figures have been consistently strong since wage increases began, this is an indication that ending the subminimum wage is having a positive long-term effect on wages and employment.

### **Washington, D.C.'s Restaurant Industry Employment Levels Hit New Records Three Months In A Row**

The most recently reported employment for full-service restaurants in the District of Columbia showed that April 2025 was the highest level of

**CHART 1**

All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia Since Records Began in 1990 To April 2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia.<sup>4</sup>

employment ever recorded, with over 30,600 workers employed at full-service establishments.

One month is not a trend. The data shows what would be expected for a trend with jobs having been on an upward trajectory in D.C.’s full-service restaurants since

August 2024. At the same time, the three highest monthly levels of employment in Washington, D.C.’s full-service restaurants have all been in the last three months of recorded data (February, March, and April 2025). When One Fair Wage analyzed the St. Louis Federal Reserve data, researchers noticed that 6 of the top 10 months of employment happened since wage increases began in 2023.<sup>5,6</sup>

**TABLE 1**

Top 10 Months of Employment in Full-Service Restaurants in the District of Columbia, 1990 to April 2025

RANK	DATE	EMPLOYEES
1	Apr 2025	30,633
2	Mar 2025	30,441
3	Feb 2025	30,215
4	Jan 2020	30,108
5	Feb 2020	30,094
6	Feb 2024	30,064
7	Dec 2024	30,047
8	Feb 2019	30,012
9	Mar 2024	30,009
10	Apr 2019	30,006

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia.<sup>7</sup>

**Washington, D.C. Residents are Top Spenders On Eating Out and Tipping Workers**

On June 12, CBS News reported on LendingTree’s findings that Washington, D.C. residents are top spenders on dining out and in spending money on tipping.<sup>8</sup> Washington, D.C. residents spent more on dining out per capita than any state in the U.S., spending \$10,291 annually, with the fair wage state of Nevada — a state with no subminimum wage for tipped workers — coming in second. According to

**TABLE 2**

Top 10 States in Per-Capita Spending on Dining Out

District of Columbia	\$10,291
Nevada	\$6,752
Hawaii	\$6,628
California	\$5,072
Massachusetts	\$4,626
Colorado	\$4,579
New York	\$4,424
Rhode Island	\$4,412
New Hampshire	\$4,224
Washington	\$4,182

Source: CBS News Reporting On LendingTree Analysis<sup>10</sup>

CBS News, three of the seven fair wage states made it into the top ten (Nevada, California, and Washington).<sup>9</sup>

CBS News also reported that Washington, D.C. was in the number two top spot for “tippers in the country.” LendingTree found that Washington, D.C. spent 12.7 percent on dining out spending on tips. As LendingTree pointed out, their research is not on the average percentage people tipped, but the percentage they spent on eating out that was a tip. As CBS News reported:

**“As LendingTree points out, average tipping rates hinge on how much people in each state spend on food outside the home – that includes full-service restaurants as well as fast-food places and even vending machines. In other words, not all food that’s consumed outside the home is purchased at establishments where tipping is common.”<sup>11</sup>**

This data indicates that Washington, D.C. residents are strong tippers, and when combined with their per capita spending, that Washington, D.C. residents have a strong eating out at full-service restaurants culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **D.C.’s Dining Out Is Thriving with Fair Wages**

As LendingTree and CBS News reported, Washington, D.C.’s residents have a strong culture of dining out. This has not abated with increases to tipped workers’ wages. This is easily seen with the months-long trend of job growth and record levels of full-service restaurant employment.

The subminimum wage for tipped workers is a legacy of slavery, rooted in greed, sexism, and racism that has been a source of race and gender inequity, poverty, and harassment for too long. Washington, D.C.’s workers are succeeding with voter-mandated wage increases. Business owners and their allies, such as Mayor Bowser, should end the misinformation campaign and attempts to override democracy. Instead, they should embrace the changes sweeping this nation before they are left behind.

- 1** Ballotpedia. Washington, D.C., Initiative 82, Increase Minimum Wage for Tipped Employees Measure (2022) [https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,\\_D.C.,\\_Initiative\\_82,\\_Increase\\_Minimum\\_Wage\\_for\\_Tipped\\_Employees\\_Measure\\_\(2022\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,_D.C.,_Initiative_82,_Increase_Minimum_Wage_for_Tipped_Employees_Measure_(2022))
- 2** One Fair Wage. The DC Success Story. April, 2025 <https://www.onefairwage.org/research-reports/the-dc-success-story>
- 3** Burbank, Ka (Jessica). The Minimum Wage Claims You Keep Hearing Are Totally Fake. We Can Prove It. Drop Site. December 31, 2024. <https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/the-minimum-wage-claims-you-keep>
- 4** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia [SMU-11000007072251101SA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SMU11000007072251101SA>, June 16, 2025.
- 5** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia [SMU-11000007072251101SA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SMU11000007072251101SA>, June 16, 2025.
- 6** Ballotpedia. Washington, D.C., Initiative 82, Increase Minimum Wage for Tipped Employees Measure (2022) [https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,\\_D.C.,\\_Initiative\\_82,\\_Increase\\_Minimum\\_Wage\\_for\\_Tipped\\_Employees\\_Measure\\_\(2022\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,_D.C.,_Initiative_82,_Increase_Minimum_Wage_for_Tipped_Employees_Measure_(2022))
- 7** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Full-Service Restaurants in District of Columbia [SMU-11000007072251101SA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SMU11000007072251101SA>, June 16, 2025.
- 8** Cunningham, Mary Which U.S. states tip most? A new study breaks down gratuity rates across the country. CBS News. June 12, 2025 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-tipping-rates-by-state-lending-tree-study/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>
- 9** Minimum Wages For Tipped Employees. (Nov 2023). U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/minimum-wage/tipped>
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- 11** Cunningham, Mary Which U.S. states tip most? A new study breaks down gratuity rates across the country. CBS News. June 12, 2025 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-tipping-rates-by-state-lending-tree-study/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

