



Conservatives adopt living-wage ruling

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The Conservative movement adopted a religious ruling requiring Jews to "strive" to hire unionized workers and pay a living wage.

The ruling, or teshuva, was adopted Tuesday by the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

"Jewish employers should strive to pay workers a living wage," says the teshuva, which offers four methods of calculating such a wage. Employers also should "strive to hire unionized workers when possible."

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, who authored the teshuva, first submitted a draft to the committee in 2003. At a meeting in September 2006, the paper garnered only three votes in favor and 10 abstentions. Six votes of the 25-member committee are required for adoption.

Jacobs, the rabbi in residence at Jewish Funds for Justice, said the measure was adopted with 13 votes in favor, two against and two abstentions.

She said the recent raid on the nation's largest kosher slaughterhouse, and subsequent allegations that the plant had mistreated its largely immigrant work force, had weighed on the committee's decision.

Jacobs told JTA that in order to address objections from committee members, she added a detailed appendix describing the potential economic impact of a living wage and softened the language, making a living wage a recommendation rather than a requirement.

The teshuva does use the language of obligation with respect to treating workers with dignity and paying them on time, which is required of Jewish employers.