

Report says many jobs fail to give economic security

By Jay Gallagher
Gannett News Service
June 13, 2008

ALBANY - Almost a third of jobs in New York don't pay enough to provide "basic economic security" to families, according to a report issued Thursday.

The report, from a labor-backed think tank, said that 5.7 million New Yorkers are part of families that face a "hardship gap:" at least one person has a job, but the earnings aren't enough to pay for basic expenses, which include food, rent, utilities, health insurance, transportation and child care.

The proportion of New York families who don't make enough to buy these services, 30 percent, is well above the national median of 22 percent and the highest of any state in the Northeast, according to the report from the Fiscal Policy Institute. Trudy Renwick, an economist with the institute, said "anemic wage levels at the low end of the job spectrum" are to blame. A wage of about \$17 per hour, with benefits, would be needed to make a family of four "economically secure," according to the report.

Renwick said state programs like subsidized health care and earned-income tax credits are helping, but "more needs to be done."

The report makes the situation look worse than the typical measurement, the federal poverty index, but Renwick said that index is misleading because it is based solely on the cost of food, and doesn't take cost-of-living differences into account. The current federal poverty line for a family of four is \$21,200 a year.

The institute says a four-member family in the Capital Region needs a minimum annual income of \$48,900.