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**$8.25 to $7.25;**

**Rauner: Cut minimum wage**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - Republican Bruce Rauner is calling for a $1-an-hour rollback in the state's minimum wage in a move Democrats described as "class warfare" on Illinois' working poor.

A Downstate Alton radio station Tuesday reported Rauner's statement in support of moving the state's minimum wage from its existing $8.25 an hour level to $7.25 an hour.

"I will advocate moving the Illinois minimum wage back to the national minimum wage," Rauner told WGBZ-AM. "I think we've got to be competitive here in Illinois."

The position puts him at odds with the other three Republicans in the March 18 gubernatorial primary and Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, who wants to raise the minimum wage to $10 per hour.

"Instead of alleviating poverty, this cruel and backwards proposal would take thousands of dollars from working people who are doing some of the hardest, most difficult jobs in our society," Quinn spokeswoman Brooke Anderson told the Sun-Times.

"We're talking about people who are cleaning and busing tables, people who are caring for our elderly, people who are working in support of people with disabilities. To take $2,000 a year from those who are earning minimum wage is not only cruel and shameful, it also hurts our economy," she said.

Republican state Treasurer Dan Rutherford; state Sen. Bill Brady, R-Bloomington; and state Sen. Kirk Dillard, R-Hinsdale, all oppose raising the minimum wage, but none have called for a rollback.

A key House Democrat ridiculed Rauner's stance Tuesday.

"In my 26 years in the Legislature, I've seen many candidates roll out anti-poverty plans, but Bruce Rauner is the only candidate to roll out a pro-poverty plan," said state Rep. Lou Lang, D-Skokie.

"He's delusional if he thinks that the General Assembly would bow to his class warfare on low-income workers. He needs to have his delusion shaken up," Lang said in a statement.

Rauner spokesman Mike Schrimpf confirmed the private equity investor made the proposal to a small Downstate radio audience in December, but it only came to light on Tuesday. Rauner has not made himself available to the Statehouse press corps in Springfield since October.