

# Facebook pushes to improve benefits, pay for contractors

May 13 2015, by Barbara Ortutay

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Facebook is pushing for higher pay and improved benefits for the janitors, cooks and other workers who support its employees.

The world's largest online social network is implementing a set of new standards for its U.S.-based contractors who do a "substantial amount of work" with Facebook.

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, announced the changes in a blog post late Tuesday. The new requirements include a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, at least 15 paid days off per year, and for those who don't receive paid parental leave, a \$4,000 "new child benefit" for new parents.

The move comes amid a nationwide push to pay low-wage workers at least \$15 per hour and improve other benefits. In Silicon Valley, where the wealth gap between tech industry luminaries and the workers who serve their lunches and clean their bathroom can be especially jarring, the movement has focused on tech giants like Apple, Google and Facebook.

Facebook had originally planned to announce the changes last Monday, as the standards are already in place for some workers. The announcement was delayed following the sudden death of Sandberg's husband, David Goldberg, on May 1.

"Taking these steps is the right thing to do for our business and our

community," wrote Sandberg, who returned to work at Facebook this week. "Women, because they comprise about two-thirds of minimum wage workers nationally, are particularly affected by wage adjustments. Research also shows that providing adequate benefits contributes to a happier and ultimately more productive workforce."

Facebook wouldn't disclose how many workers its changes will affect, but the number is likely in the hundreds as it includes kitchen staff, janitors, security guards and other workers who are employed by outside contractors and vendors to support its sprawling headquarters in Menlo Park, California and elsewhere in the U.S.

Sandberg said the new standards were put in place May 1 for "some of our largest support teams" at the company's headquarters and the company is planning to implement it with a broader set of U.S. vendors this year.

The new standards apply to Facebook's shuttle bus drivers, the company said. But the drivers voted to unionize earlier this year with the Teamsters and Rome Aloise, international vice president for Teamsters Local 853, said the starting wage in their contracts already exceeds \$15 per hour, as does paid time off.

"But I do think that Facebook is exhibiting themselves to be responsible corporate citizens," he said. "(We're) hoping the rest of the tech companies will follow their lead."

At Google's Northern California campuses, support staff such as bus drivers, parking attendants, guards and cafe workers earns a minimum of \$15 an hour, according to the company. The changes went into effect April 1, a month before Facebook's.

Google says it has also been working to reduce the number of split shifts

bus drivers have, which has been a major complaint for workers who must drive during morning and evening rush hour, leading to extraordinarily long days. The company is also pushing to increase driver pay to at least \$24 per hour, with a 15 percent premium on top of that for those who work split shifts.

In March, Microsoft said it will require its U.S. suppliers to give paid time off to employees who do work at the company at least 15 days of paid time off each year. The changes will be implemented over the next year.

"Facebook did the right thing in making sure that workers are paid a minimum of \$15 an hour," said Kendall Fells, National Organizing Director of the Fight for \$15. " If Facebook can raise pay to \$15, so can McDonald's."

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