

March 31, 2014

**Protect Working Families  
Vote for the Minimum Wage Fairness Act (S. 1737)**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 237 undersigned organizations, we urge you to vote for the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D. Iowa). The bill is a common sense reform that is a key part of the nation's economic recovery and is needed more than ever to address the shift toward low-wage jobs for working families.

The Minimum Wage Fairness Act takes necessary steps to help working families make ends meet, sustain consumer spending, and spur economic recovery. The bill would raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 by 2016, in three increments of 95 cents each. Further, the bill would adjust the minimum wage each year to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Finally, the bill would also raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, which has been frozen at a meager \$2.13 per hour for more than 20 years. These changes will make a significant difference in the lives of millions of low-wage workers and their families and help grow our economy.

A raise in the minimum wage is desperately needed because pay for America's workers remains stagnant, while the cost of living continues to rise. In 2007, Congress raised the federal minimum wage by \$2.10 per hour to \$7.25 as a first step toward achieving its purpose as an anti-poverty measure. Had the federal minimum wage kept pace with the cost of living over the past 40 years, it would be \$10.71 per hour today.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the current hourly rate of \$7.25 translates to an annual income of just \$15,080 per year for full-time work, which is below the poverty line for a family of three.

**Raising the minimum wage would generate economic activity.** Minimum wage increases stimulate the economy by increasing consumer spending, without adding to state and federal budget deficits. Raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour would generate \$22 billion in new economic activity in communities across the country.<sup>2</sup> Despite fears about the adverse effect of a minimum wage increase on businesses, studies demonstrate that when the minimum wage has been increased, there has been no significant reduction in employment or slowing of job growth, even when the economy was struggling.<sup>3</sup> Strengthening the minimum wage can help build a sustainable economic recovery—without increasing costs for taxpayers.

**Raising the minimum wage does not cause job loss.** The best economic research and real world experiences with minimum wage increases confirm that raising the minimum wage does not cause job loss. According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, which reviewed the past two decades of research on the impact of minimum wage increases on employment, “the weight of the evidence points to little or no effect of minimum wage increases on job growth.”<sup>4</sup> A recent Congressional Budget Report contradicts the overwhelming evidence that demonstrates that raising the federal minimum wage will actually improve our economy and create jobs.<sup>5</sup> The experience of businesses and scholarly studies show that what companies lose when they pay more is often offset by lower turnover and increased productivity.<sup>6</sup>

**Raising the minimum wage has public support.** Raising the minimum wage has received broad support. Overall, 73 percent of the public favors raising the federal minimum wage from its current level of \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10 an hour.<sup>7</sup> Further, states around the country are enacting minimum wage hikes. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have raised their minimum wages higher than the current federal rate of \$7.25 per hour and legislation to raise and/or index the minimum wage has been introduced

in several states.<sup>8</sup> The American economy needs a strong national wage floor to protect workers in all regions of the country.

**Raising the minimum wage is a civil rights imperative.** Providing America's lowest paid workers with a raise is a critical civil and human rights issue given the impact it would have on women, African Americans, Latinos, and other minority populations, including the Native American, AAPI, LGBT, and disability<sup>9</sup> communities, whose poverty rates are also disproportionately high. Women and communities of color are disproportionately represented among the 30 million Americans who will benefit from a higher minimum wage.<sup>10</sup> According to the Economic Policy Institute:

- Women comprise 49 percent of U.S. workers, yet make up 56 percent of workers who would be affected by a potential minimum-wage increase.<sup>11</sup>
- African Americans make up only 11 percent of the workforce, but are 14 percent of those that would benefit from a higher minimum wage.<sup>12</sup>
- Hispanics represent only 15 percent of the workforce, yet comprise 25 percent of those that would benefit from a higher minimum wage.<sup>13</sup>

Setting the minimum wage at an appropriate level can promote economic growth while strengthening the ability of low- and middle-wage workers to have quality jobs. We urge you to vote for the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, which will help provide America's lowest paid workers with an urgently needed raise while boosting the consumer spending that fuels the economy. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lexer Quamie, Senior Counsel at The Leadership Conference at [quamie@civilrights.org](mailto:quamie@civilrights.org) or (202) 466-3648 or Arun Ivatury, Campaign Strategist at the National Employment Law Project at [aivatury@nelp.org](mailto:aivatury@nelp.org) or 202-887-8202 x. 366. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

### **National Organizations**

9 to 5

Advocates for Basic Legal Equity

AFL-CIO

African American Health Alliance

Agricultural Justice Project

Alliance for a Just Society

Alliance for a Retired America

Alliance for Biking & Walking

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association of University Women

American Family Voices

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

American Friends Service Committee

Americans for Democratic Action

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living

Bazon Center for Mental Health Law

Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice

Bread for the World

Campaign for America's Future

Campaign for Community Change

Center for American Progress  
Center for Effective Government  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Center for Social Inclusion  
Children's Defense Fund  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Communities Assuring a Sustainable Agriculture  
Community Action Partnership  
Community Food and Justice Coalition  
Community Organizations in Action  
CourageCampaign.org  
Dēmos  
Digital Sisters Inc.  
Direct Care Alliance  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Economic Policy Institute  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Every Child Matters Education Fund  
Fair World Project  
Faith in Public Life  
Family Farm Defenders  
Family Values @ Work  
Farmworker Justice  
Food and Water Watch  
Food Chain Workers Alliance  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Grassroots International  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
Half in Ten  
Healthy Farms Healthy People Coalition  
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
International Labor Rights Forum  
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Women International  
JOBS NOW Coalition  
Jobs With Justice/American Rights at Work  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center  
Legal Momentum  
MomsRising  
Ms. Foundation for Women  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations  
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Mothers' Centers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Capital Area Union Retirees  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Council on Independent Living  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund  
National Guestworker Alliance  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women and Families  
National People's Action  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
National Workrights Institute  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance  
Organic Consumers Association  
OurTime.org  
Partnership for Working Families  
Patriotic Millionaires for Fiscal Strength  
Pesticide Action Network North America  
PICO National Network  
PolicyLink  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Progressive Congress  
Progressive States Action  
Progressive States Network  
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United  
RESULTS  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
School Food FOCUS  
Senate for Community Change  
Service Employees International Union  
Social Security Works  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice  
The Agenda Project  
The Every Child Matters Education Fund

The Farmworkers Support Committee (C.A.T.A.)  
The Legal Aid Society  
The National Transitional Jobs Network  
The Smart Capitalists for American Prosperity  
U.S. Jesuit Conference  
U.S. Labor Against the War  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union  
United Spinal Association  
United Steelworkers  
USAction  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Voices for Progress  
West Side Campaign Against Hunger  
Wider Opportunities for Women  
Women Employed  
Women's National Democratic Club  
Women's Media Center  
Working America  
Working Families Organization  
Working Partnerships USA  
YWCA USA

#### **State Organizations**

9 to 5 Atlanta  
9 to 5 California  
9 to 5 Colorado  
9 to 5 Wisconsin  
Action North Carolina  
Alliance for a Greater New York  
Arkansas Interfaith Alliance  
Bread for the City  
Brooklyn Food Coalition  
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Central Arizonans for a Sustainable Economy (CASE, Phoenix)  
Citizen Action of Wisconsin  
CLUE-CA (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, California)  
Collective Action for Safe Spaces  
Collective Roots  
Colorado Fiscal Institute  
Colorado Progressive Coalition  
Community, Faith & Labor Coalition, Indianapolis, IN  
Connecticut Center for a New Economy  
CREDO  
Damayan Migrant Workers Association  
D.C. Tenants' Rights Center  
DC Jobs Council  
Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project  
Economic Opportunity Institute

Employment Justice Center  
Faith in Public Life  
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.  
Fiscal Policy Institute  
Florida Institute for Reform and Empowerment  
Food Empowerment Project  
FRESA: Good Jobs, Strong Communities  
Garden Share  
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition  
Hunger Action Network of New York  
Indiana Institute for Working Families  
Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin  
Interfaith Worker Justice – New Mexico  
Interfaith Worker Justice Committee of Colorado  
LAANE (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy)  
Leadership Center for the Common Good  
Let Justice Roll  
Live Real  
Louisiana Budget Project  
Maine Center for Economic Justice  
Maine People’s Alliance  
Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice  
Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition  
MFY Legal Services  
Michigan League for Public Policy  
Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network  
Missouri Jobs With Justice  
Missouri ProVote and Missouri Citizen Education Fund  
Mon Valley Unemployed Committee  
Mothers Outreach Network, Inc.  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
New Jersey Policy Perspective  
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty  
New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice  
NH Citizens Alliance for Action  
North Carolina Justice Center  
Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center  
Other Worlds  
OWL  
Oregon Action  
Organize Now  
PA Partnership for Direct Care Workers  
Path Ways PA  
Policy Matters Ohio  
Progressive Maryland  
Public Justice Center  
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
SOME, Inc.  
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice  
St. Paul Church of God in Christ Community Development Ministries

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis  
The Workers' Rights Center of Madison, WI  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute  
Virginia Organizing  
Voices for Progress  
Washington Area Women's Foundation  
Washington Community Action Network  
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless  
Wisconsin Jobs Now  
Wisconsin's Future  
Workers Interfaith Network, Memphis, TN  
Workers' Center of Central New York

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, David, EPI Briefing Paper, Raising the Minimum Wage to \$10.10 Would Lift Wages for Millions and Provide a Modest Economic Boost. <http://s1.epi.org/files/2014/EPI-1010-minimum-wage.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Schmitt, John "Why Does the Minimum Wage Have no Discernible Effect on Employment," Center for Economic and Policy Research, Feb. 2013. <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Why does the Minimum Wage Have No Discernible Effect on Employment? <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The effect of raising the minimum wage is one of the most thoroughly studied topics in modern economics, and the vast majority of the more than 1,000 estimates contained in studies dating back to 1972 show no significant adverse effects on employment. In fact, more than 600 prominent economists, including 7 Nobel laureates, have signed a letter in support of raising the federal minimum wage. See <http://www.epi.org/minimum-wage-statement/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/opinion/business-and-the-minimum-wage.html?hpw&rref=opinion&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/opinion/business-and-the-minimum-wage.html?hpw&rref=opinion&_r=0)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.people-press.org/2014/01/23/most-see-inequality-growing-but-partisans-differ-over-solutions/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-minimum-wage-chart.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> While lack of data makes it impossible to calculate the percentage of people with disabilities who would benefit from a higher minimum wage, at least 28 percent of people living with a severe disability are living in poverty, while 18 percent of people with a nonsevere disability are living in poverty. [http://www.oppi.gobierno.pr/Censo\\_C\\_SPAN\\_Slides\\_Disability2012.pdf](http://www.oppi.gobierno.pr/Censo_C_SPAN_Slides_Disability2012.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Mishel, Lawrence, Declining value of the federal minimum wage is a major factor Driving Inequality, Feb. 21, 2013. <http://www.epi.org/publication/declining-federal-minimum-wage-inequality/>

<sup>11</sup> Hall, Doug and David Cooper, A \$10.10 Minimum Wage Would Give Economy (and More Low-Wage Workers) a Bigger Boost, March 5, 2013. <http://www.epi.org/blog/10-10-minimum-wage-give-economy-wage-workers/>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*