

**League of Women Voters of Boulder County
Feb. 26, 2019 Testimony to
Longmont City Council**

Mayor Bagley and fellow Council members:

We urge the city to set minimum hourly wages to employees of local companies paid with city funds by inserting a ***labor practices clause with an index for timely increases*** into these contracts. We await results from staff collection of current wage data from these companies.

Typical debates about minimum wage have looked at the effects on the labor market. I will refer instead to recent studies that looked at the **public health effects of low wages**. These are from the New York Times of 2/25/19. (*Dollars on the Margins: The fight for a \$15 minimum wage isn't just about improving lives; it's about saving them.* Matthew Desmond. NYT 2-25-19)

~ Low-skilled workers reported fewer unmet medical needs in states with higher minimum wages while those in low wage states skipped medical appointments.

~ Children benefitted most from minimum wage increases. Raising minimum wage by \$1. reduces child-neglect reports by almost 10%.

~ Higher minimum wages are linked to decreases in low birth weight babies, lower rates of teen alcohol consumption and declines in teen births.

~ “When people live so close to the bone, a small setback can quickly spiral into a major trauma...an unpaid traffic ticket can lead to suspended license, and a loss of a means to get to work...” “A \$15 minimum wage is an anti-depressant, a sleep aid, a stress reliever...” (American Journal of Public Health, 2016.)

~ “When the minimum wage goes up, I see it,” says the Director of University of San Francisco Center for Vulnerable Populations: people exercise more, quit smoking, mental health improves dramatically and folks immediately start eating healthier diets.

~ “A living minimum wage buys prescriptions and rest and broccoli... and (helps) people feel more capable and proud.”

People thrive better when they feel valued and a population that thrives is part of Longmont's Vision 2020.

The LWVBC urges Longmont to raise wages for contract employees to the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS). We refer you to The Colorado Center for Law and Policy 2018 SSS data for each county in the state, by family composition.

THANK YOU
Mary Ann Wilner

**I'm Kay Marsh from the LWVBC speaking on behalf of the
Longmont Living Wage Coalition.**

We hope our city council will move to a living wage for the City of Longmont's contract workers. We base our concerns on Boulder County's self-sufficiency numbers.

The self-sufficiency standard is the wage at which an individual or family can support him or herself without reliance on public or private supports.

You've already heard that low wage workers need to work at two or three jobs. I'm sure you are familiar with how family issues come up without the parents around because they are working --particularly around truancy and how to adequately care for children.

You've heard about the public health effects of low wages - low paid workers have unmet medical needs.

And now - the cost of housing in Longmont. I'll bet you already know that it is expensive to live in Longmont.

In the Boulder Metropolitan Statistical Area:

One bedroom apartment \$1,195 / wages of \$47,800 /\$22.98 hourly.

Two bedroom apartment -\$1,461 / wages of \$58,440 / \$28.10 hourly.

We in the Longmont Living Wage Coalition have moved up the number that approaches a self-sufficiency standard here **from \$15.86 to \$17.42.**

This is based on the self-sufficiency standard published by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy in Boulder County.

\$17.42 is the average of two figures – 1. *the cost of living at self-sufficiency for a single adult* and 2. *the cost of living at self-sufficiency for a family* – 2 parents, a toddler and a school age child.

Please adopt a living wage for our City's contract workers. Thank you.

Mary Ann Watson testimony to Longmont City Council

March 19, 2019

Mayor Bagley and City Council members:

I am Mary Ann Watson, a supporter of the Coalition for a Living Wage. In past weeks you have heard our members speak of the public health effects of low wages as well as the effects on the labor market. Rather than giving you more data, I would like to make a personal observation. I have been a member of the Boulder County Circles Program, a volunteer with the OUR Center and am a volunteer with HOPE. I am also a member of the Heart of Longmont United Methodist Church which has recently signed as a supporter of the Coalition for a Living Wage. Through these experiences, I have been amazed and dismayed at the number of people needing assistance in our community who are working full-time and many who are working 2 and 3 jobs.

I have seen firsthand the toll low wages takes on people's health and self-esteem. I have also seen the improvements in the lives of those who have been able to increase their wages. At one time, I erroneously assumed people needing public assistance were not working, for many reasons. But now, the phrase "the working poor" has taken on faces of people I know.

The talk of increasing minimum wages to a living wage is a good start. Therefore, one of my requests is that **city council support state bill HB19-1210** to eliminate the law that prevents a local government from setting a minimum wage within its jurisdiction. As you know Boulder County requires a much higher living wage than some other parts of our state. I refer you to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for 2018.

I feel proud of the City of Longmont for its efforts already in effect related to living wages for our city employees. Now we are asking the city to extend those concerns to members of our community who work for companies that the city has contracts with.

We have had conversations with many of you on the council and with some city staff. Again I remind you that we are urging the city to set living minimum wages to employees of local companies paid with city funds by inserting **a labor practices clause** with an index for timely increases into these contracts. We are waiting to hear results from staff collection of current wage data from these companies. Then, as you begin to prepare a budget for 2020, you will have data to guide you to include any increases that may be necessary.

This can be one part of Longmont's Vision 2020, one part of a thriving community.

Thank you.

AAUW, Longmont Branch testimony to Longmont City Council
Longmont Living Wage Coalition
March 26, 2019

Good evening, Mayor Bagley and members of City Council. I am Darcy Juday, and I am a supporter of the Longmont Living Wage Coalition.

As you've heard, a living wage is the wage floor that allows workers to support themselves without government assistance, and that amount varies by location. For instance, the Colorado minimum wage, although higher than the Federal minimum, is not high enough to be a living wage in Boulder County. We congratulate City Council for voting last week to support HB 1210, which would allow local governments to set appropriate minimum wages for all workers within their jurisdiction.

I am here representing the Longmont branch of AAUW, The American Association of University Women, which has about 70 Longmont members. I'd like to tell you why Longmont AAUW felt driven to join the Longmont Living Wage Coalition. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity and to break down barriers to success for women and girls. Pay that is below a living wage is certainly a barrier to success.

Longmont AAUW puts a lot of effort into advocating and educating on pay-related issues. For instance, this year we held a public roundtable on Pay Equity in northern Colorado, with a local legislator and several local employers as speakers. We collaborate with Front Range Community College to present our AAUW Start Smart and Work Smart salary negotiation workshops. And you may know us best through our decades of booksales, which allowed us to provide \$120,000 over the years for college scholarships [2 min] for local women, and community action grants for local programs that serve women.

All this is to say that one of Longmont AAUW's major focuses is economic security for women and their families. That is why we were pleased to join the Longmont Living Wage Coalition, along with the League of Women Voters, local non-profit organizations, and many Longmont citizens.

Here is what we ask: We know that currently the City is allowed to set minimum wages only for workers paid with City funds. We are proud that Longmont has chosen to set a living minimum wage for its full-time employees. But you have not yet made that living wage benefit available to every possible City-paid worker. We encourage you now to set living minimum wages for those workers who are employees of local companies paid with City funds. You could do that by inserting a **labor practices clause**, with an index for timely increases, into City contracts.

We hope that you will consider this issue as you create the 2020 budget, and give more Longmont people, in your words, "the opportunity to thrive and feel that they belong".

Thank you.

Letter to Longmont City Council from Retired District Judge Roxanne Bailin

Dear Members of City Council:

I would like to support your efforts to raise the wages paid by your contractors to the Longmont living wage. First, I applaud your decision to provide city workers with the elevated wage. As a judge for 31 years in the district court and as chief judge for the final 15 years of that time, I saw the myriad negative effects of poverty on thousands of adults, teenagers, and children who appeared before me. Some older siblings are truant because they must stay at home to care for younger siblings when they are ill and cannot go to school or day care. They fall behind in school and enter the truancy system. Some teenagers work part or even full time to help their parents and arrive at school tired and stressed. Their fatigue interferes with their ability to learn. Failure to finish high school is highly correlated with drug use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, smoking, and continued poverty, which then falls on government and health care systems to ameliorate at great cost.

Parents who work two jobs cannot adequately supervise and interact with their children. Stress can cause neglect and abuse. Such parents often neglect their own health because they do not have time to see doctors or money to pay them. Impoverished parents are more likely to smoke, eat poorly, and suffer from hypertension and Type 2 diabetes. Such parents can experience extreme stress and depression. Studies have shown that depressed and stressed parents are a major predictor for poor outcomes for children.

In a study done in 2015 in Boulder County, the chances of reading at grade level by the third grade are only 55% if the child grew up in poverty, but 90% if his parents make \$30,000 a year. Although the needed income is no doubt higher four years later, the principle still holds true. This is a dramatic statistic. Success in school is a critical avenue to the middle class.

Thank you very much for your attention to my comments. I am available for additional discussion if you wish.

Roxanne Bailin
District Judge (Ret.)