

FOIA MARKER

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5/22 - 11:00AM

DRAFT PANETTA STATEMENT

While a bipartisan majority in the Congress stands ready to give minimum wage workers a raise, the House Republican leadership plans instead to deprive as many as 10 million workers of any minimum wage increase. Millions of workers taking new jobs will be entirely denied minimum wage, overtime, and child labor protections under the Republican plan. This dramatic leap backwards from current law --- effectively exempting all new employees of two-thirds of all firms from major worker protection provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act --- threatens the President's efforts to raise working families' incomes. It goes well beyond the small retail and service business exemption that existed in the law prior to 1989. This proposal invites a return to the sweatshop conditions that Americans abhor.

By resurrecting and making permanent the failed experiment of a youth subminimum wage, the Republican leadership would pit young workers against older incumbent workers. In industries where high turnover is common --- like retail --- some young workers may never graduate from the youth subminimum wage.

We cannot allow the Republican leadership to give with one hand and take away with the other. Let's put aside this Republican family income reduction package. America's working families deserve a clean, up-or-down, yes-or-no vote on making the minimum wage a living wage.