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Minimum Wage

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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 20, 2000

*Minimum
Wage*



421363

Dear Mr. President:

We want to urge the Administration to work actively to assure that Minimum Wage legislation include not only a dollar increase in the wage over two years, but also meaningful provisions to expand work opportunities for those who, despite the nation's prolonged economic prosperity, still face significant barriers to finding employment.

In their current form, both the House and Senate minimum wage bills include millions of dollars in business tax breaks that have virtually nothing to do with expanding job opportunities for individuals in communities that have been little touched by the strong economy. These communities continue to experience unemployment rates at least two to three times higher than the national average. While the Senate bill includes a hiring incentive--a permanent extension of both the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit--the House measure does not.

Since WOTC's inception in October of 1996, nearly 900,000 individuals have found jobs through employers who have used hiring tax incentives to finance their company's welfare-to-work effort. Hiring tax incentives help to pay for the establishment of outreach, screening, training, transportation, and mentoring programs which are all designed to increase both welfare hiring and retention in the work place. It turns out that because of the eligibility criteria used for these programs, about 80% of those hired are women. But many men need help too, especially those with children on welfare. Their employment deficiencies are comparable to those of the women who are getting hired, and many are in food stamp families, but they are not currently eligible for any hiring tax incentive.

We believe the best way to address this unmet need would be to modify WOTC eligibility criteria by eliminating the current 24-year old age limit on the food stamp category and for those who reside in EZ/ECs. This approach recognizes that more than 90% of those in food stamp households have incomes below the poverty line, and that non-working males in such households face virtually the same barriers to finding work as those individuals who come from welfare households. This proposal was included in the Democrat alternative to the House Republican tax cuts included in the minimum wage legislation. We also believe that both tax credit programs should be extended permanently, as the Senate proposes.

We have a real opportunity to build on the infrastructure that has developed over the past 32 years to help those on welfare transition to work. If we can agree that there is a need to expand economic opportunities for seniors on Social Security by eliminating the earnings test, surely the Administration and Congress can see the need to expand job opportunities to more people facing real barriers to employment.

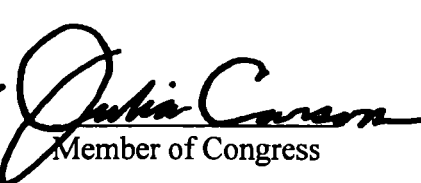
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Therefore, we urge you to insist that the final minimum wage conference agreement include both a permanent extension of WOTC and the W-t-W tax credits as well as a provision which would lift the age ceiling for those on food stamps or who reside in an EZ/EC.

CC: Chairman of Ways and Means

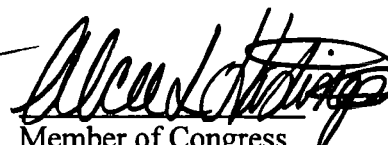
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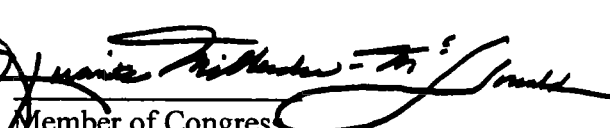

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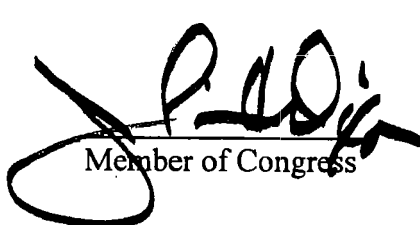

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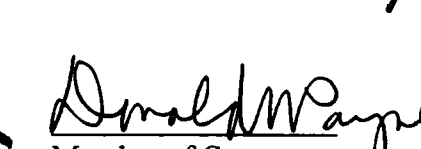

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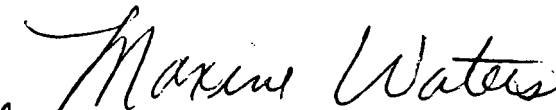

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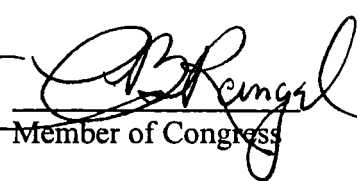

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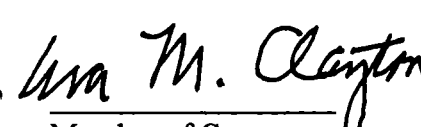

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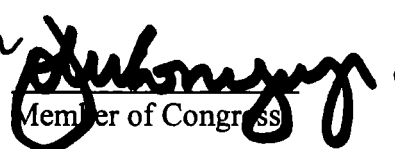

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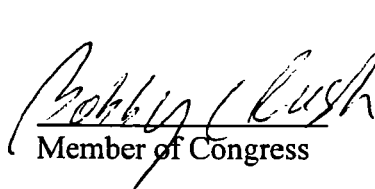

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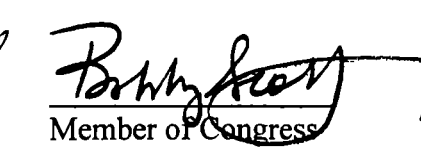

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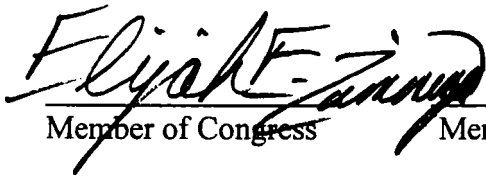
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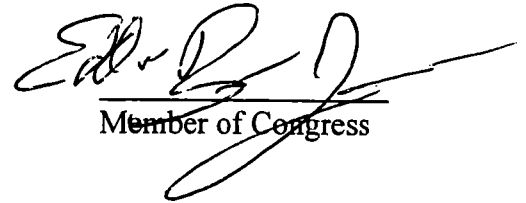
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