

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.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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.”⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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 disability⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹
- African Americans make up only 11 percent of the workforce, but are 14 percent of those that would benefit from a higher minimum wage.¹²
- Hispanics represent only 15 percent of the workforce, yet comprise 25 percent of those that would benefit from a higher minimum wage.¹³

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 or (202) 466-3648 or Arun Ivatury, Campaign Strategist at the National Employment Law Project at 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

¹ See http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

² 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>

³ 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>

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

⁵ 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/>

⁶ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/opinion/business-and-the-minimum-wage.html?hpw&rref=opinion&_r=0

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

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

⁹ 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

¹⁰ 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/>

¹¹ 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/>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*