

National Organization for Women

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Dear Senator,

The National Organization for Women, with members and supporters all across this nation and in your state, urges you to vote for a “clean” bill to raise the minimum wage when it comes to the Senate floor for a vote this week. It is vital that you support the cloture motion on this clean bill, as well as final passage. NOW cannot support a minimum wage bill that has: expensive tax giveaways; anti-worker amendments; a version of the line-item veto; or any other extraneous amendment designed to water down or kill the minimum wage increase. Women voters sent a message to the Senate in the last election and that was to pass legislation, including a raise in the minimum wage, with no sneaky tricks, riders, earmarks or other stealth add-ons.

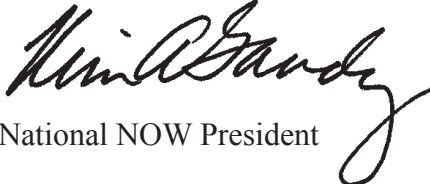
An increase in the federal minimum wage from its current level of \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour is a raise that is long overdue for our country’s hard working low income employees.

Because it is not indexed for inflation and has no automatic cost-of-living adjustment, the minimum wage continues to lose purchasing power for those working in low-wage jobs. This is especially important for women who comprise the majority of the 13 million workers who will benefit from an increase in the federal minimum wage.

It is a travesty that a full-time year-round worker earns \$10,712 at minimum wage, almost \$6,000 below the federal poverty line for a family of three. How can we extol the virtues of work while permitting almost 3 million full-time, year-round workers and their children to live in poverty?

Please show your support for this important women’s issue by voting for cloture and supporting a clean bill to raise the minimum wage. When you do this, you will be helping hard working women and single parents get a raise.

Sincerely,


National NOW President

Attachment: Real people’s minimum wage stories

Minimum Wage Stories Submitted to the National Organization for Women

January 2007

Increasing the minimum wage is good for business:

Linda C, TX: I used to own a small business--really small, my husband and me, plus two employees--in a shopping mall-- and the starting pay for new employees was \$8.00/hr. Paying more than my competitors insured employee loyalty; it's hard to keep training new employees, so paying more at the start and offering incentives and bonuses for improvement was a good investment. Wages were the least of our expenses--the cost that drove us out of business was high rent at the mall, another story altogether.

Increasing the minimum wage will help students afford school:

J. M. K: I worked through college at fast-food joints...out of 30 employees, MAYBE 5 were students or "teenagers earning pin money." Most were either military wives (so much for paying our troops), retirees who had no pension or SSI, or people trying to pay the rent as part of the "glorious welfare reform." I was one of the lucky ones in being able to go to school on top of this, but my grades were in the gutter. The experience has been valuable in permanently embittering me to the very notion that an employer gives a damn to anyone they employ. The same people who crow about how the small businessman will be affected by a raise in the minimum wage are usually the same ones running him out of town for another big box store.

Dawn P, CA: I received my Bachelors Degree from USC with a 3.8 GPA and one year after graduating from university I declared bankruptcy. The debt I accrued in order to survive during my time at my minimum wage jobs was enormous, and 6 years later, I am still working to rebuild my credit.

Kimberly A, CO: I was born, very much planned, into a loving but poor family. Thankfully, my parents always sacrificed so that I had a home, food, and new and used clothing. However, this also meant that, being the first member of my family to even contemplate college, I would be responsible for all of my own costs. I started working at age 15 with a wage of \$4.25/hour, before taxes. I did so while maintaining a near 4.0 GPA, so that I could attend college. Having to work so many hours just to be able to save some money for college and a car was very painful. My other friends worked a few hours a week for gas money, while I was working to get a car so that I could drive to a job instead of walking for 20 minutes every night. Even as I finished college in 2005, I was struggling to make ends meet while I student taught and had to wait until October to get my first teaching paycheck. Of course, I couldn't pay any of my bills on time. Even though I was music major, I had to sell the only instrument I ever owned to make rent one month. Even with all the sacrifices I made, I still ended up with \$10,000 in credit card debt, in addition to all of my student loans. It has been two years since then, and I am still years away from paying off that debt from having to work for so low a wage for less than one year. I will never comprehend how a single parent with no credit card makes ends meet.

Increasing the minimum wage will help struggling individuals and families:

Rachelle S: I live in Brooklyn, New York, and I work two jobs, one at my school, and another one in my neighborhood. My mom has been working with the Department of Education for quite some time

as well. As working class people, we would like to see an increase in the minimum wage because what we are making now is not sufficient to pay for the majority of our expenditures, including rent, food, bills, and other expenses that come up each month. An increase in the minimum wage would be a much-needed resource for many people, as well as a sign of gratitude for all of the hard work we have done up until this point.

Sharon-Frances R: After 45 years of working at extremely low minimum and slightly above (since many employers feel they have bought their way into Heaven by paying 10 cents above the minimum!) wage, I was cut 2 years short of full SS by a mobility disability. Even with disability, my income is LESS THAN HALF the average income of the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans at the time of Hurricane Katrina (as reported by US News & World Report). Even with such low income (a little more than \$12K) I still "Make too much" to get a wheelchair or auto lift. Thank God, I am used to being poor!

Karin F, NY: I started my job in 2004 and I only work part time at less than minimum wage. How can there be "jobs" with less than minimum wage! Even after I got my second year "raise" I was getting \$7.05. How can that be allowed?

Gayle K: I am a volunteer adult literacy tutor in Utah. My current student, a single young adult, earns a minimum wage and even working overtime (some of which her employer finds loopholes to avoid paying), she can barely make ends meet. At our weekly tutoring sessions she is sometimes so exhausted that she falls asleep. She is an extremely organized person--attempting to live on a strict budget but failing because her earnings cannot pay for the minimum basics of life (room, board, and utilities). We'd like her to have internet connectivity so we can communicate between sessions, but her budget won't allow that. She has none of the "amenities" that you'd expect of a young 20-something. I'm horrified by what she goes through to live on what she can earn. I can't imagine a family living on the current minimum wage.

Pat G, WI: While big business thrives, millions of single moms must take any job anywhere for any pay. They face permanent poverty and many return to their batterers.

Kate B: As the director of a shelter for homeless youth and young adults, I see daily the effects of having the minimum wage so low that people cannot support themselves. Our shelter is full of young adults who work full time at minimum wage jobs, but cannot afford housing, food, and other necessities. In addition, we feed many other youth who are minimum wage earners and earn only enough for rent, but can't afford food as well. Until the minimum wage is raised, there will continue to be increasing numbers of working homeless people

Barbara E: I am very physically disabled and was lucky to get a job telecommuting from home. However, because I only get paid for hours worked and get no sick pay or vacation pay, I have trouble paying my bills when I'm too sick to work.

Sue L: I think \$7.25 hour is ridiculously low, that's \$15,080 a year. The head Supreme Court justice wrote several pages explaining why the lowest paid Federal judges could not live on \$165,000 a year and they all needed a raise, including himself at \$212,000. Go figure.

Tiffanie P-K: With a higher minimum wage I would be able to help my mother feed her children. Minimum wage isn't enough to pay bills and feed a family.