

Sample Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The July 24 raise in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour, the last of three such increases enacted by Congress in 2007, will help millions of workers cope with the rising price of food, housing, and other basic items. The extra earnings of up to \$28 per week could help pay for health care or school supplies, but it won't get many people out of poverty.

Do the math: according to the latest Census Bureau statistics, the official poverty threshold for a family of three is an annual income of \$17,346, yet someone who works a full-time minimum wage job at \$7.25 per hour earns only \$15,080 per year. Moreover, research shows that families need to earn more than double the official poverty line to meet their actual basic needs.

<Insert a sentence or two with a local angle that illustrates how an increase in the minimum wage will affect your state. For example, While Massachusetts is among 18 states that have already set their minimum wages at \$7.25 or higher, even \$8 per hour is a poverty wage.>

Raising the minimum wage benefits local businesses and communities, since low-wage workers spend their much-needed pay raises in neighborhoods where they live and work. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the first two increases in 2007 and 2008 will have generated an estimated \$4.9 billion of spending, and this month's increase is expected to generate another \$5.5 billion over the coming year.

More importantly, raising the minimum wage is a not just good for the economy — it's a women's issue, a children's rights issue, or, in short, a moral issue that should weigh on our national conscience. The least we can do is make up lost ground and bring the minimum wage closer to an adequate living standard.

Your name

Your address

Daytime telephone number

<Word count—Approx 270 words>

#####

Sample Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The July 24 raise in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour, the last of three such increases enacted by Congress in 2007, will help millions of workers cope with the rising price of food, housing, and other basic items. The extra earnings of up to \$28 per week could help pay for health care or school supplies, but it won't get many people out of poverty.

In this time of economic turmoil, the increase in the minimum wage is part of the solution, not the problem, since the extra weekly pay of up to \$28 for low-income workers will be spent at neighborhood businesses on basic needs like food, fuel, housing, and health care.

Numerous studies cited by Let Justice Roll, a nonpartisan coalition of faith, labor, and business organizations, demonstrate clearly that increasing the minimum wage is sound business practice and provides a stimulus to local economies.

Let's keep things in perspective: even with the increase, the purchasing power of the minimum wage will still be lower than when Eisenhower was president. And the new income floor of \$15,080 a year is less than what a corporate CEO at a Standard & Poor's 500 company earns before lunch-time on any given day.

Your name

Your address

Daytime telephone number

#####

<205 words>

Examples of Letters to the Editor

The Boston Globe

July 14, 2009

Business owners support living wage

IN HIS critique of raising the minimum wage, Jeff Jacoby (Op-ed, July 8) cites economists who have predicted that jobs would be lost as a result of such an increase. He's certainly not talking to owners of small or mid-sized businesses. We hire workers because there is work to be done, and we certainly do not lay someone off because we are "forced" to pay \$7.25 an hour. As a business owner who employs more than 700 people, most of whom are part time (the majority of whom make more than the minimum wage), I am never troubled by the raise of a minimum wage. In fact, many local entrepreneurs I work with are promoting a "living wage," which helps move people out of poverty.

It is a blight on our society that people who work hard, many times even two or more jobs, cannot have a standard of living that enables them to live above the poverty level and to be able to pay their bills.

Creating communities that provide good jobs with decent pay should be an objective of every responsible business owner, because, as Henry Ford showed, if your employees make enough money to buy the products you make, your company will experience great financial and community success.

Laury Hammel, Wayland

The writer is owner of the Longfellow Clubs and executive director of the Sustainable Business Network.

<211 words>

#####

The Boston Globe

TAKING MEASURE OF MINIMUM WAGE

Data back up push for increase

July 14, 2009

JEFF JACOBY (“Minimum-wage folly,” Op-ed, July 8) correctly quoted me as saying that minimum wage increases do not increase unemployment, but he failed to mention the empirical research I’ve summarized on the Let Justice Roll website to back that up.

Numerous studies refute the claim of disemployment effects at the local, state, and national level. The period between 1997 and 2007, when the federal minimum wage first topped \$5.15, was the longest period in history without a raise. States that raised their minimum wages above the federal level experienced better employment and small business trends than states that did not.

Even after the increase to \$7.25, the minimum wage will be lower, adjusted for inflation, than the \$7.86 minimum wage of 1956 and much lower than 1968’s \$9.83. Perhaps Jacoby thinks today’s workers are worth less than their 1950s and 1960s counterparts. I do not.

The minimum wage was enacted during the Great Depression. President Roosevelt called it “an essential part of economic recovery,” putting a needed floor under workers’ wages and stimulating the economy and job creation by increasing consumer purchasing power.

As we see so painfully, an economy built on rising greed and debt rather than living wages is a house of cards.

Holly Sklar, Jamaica Plain

The writer is senior policy adviser with the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign.

<205 words>

#####

Lawrence Journal-World, Lawrence, Kansas

Shameful wage

May 8, 2008

To the editor:

Food and fuel prices are soaring, eating into everyone's income and hurting the poor above all - and business professor Mark Hirschey considers this an opportune moment to "take a stand" against raising the minimum wage? (Journal-World, April 1) The housing crisis is forcing thousands of full-time workers out of their homes, and Hirschey calls

Luckily, that kind of nay-saying did not prevent Congress from passing legislation in 2007 to raise the federal minimum wage in three phases: from \$5.15 to \$5.85 (last July), to \$6.55 (this July), and ultimately to \$7.25 (in 2009).

The positive effects of this legislation will be keenly felt in Kansas, where 240,000 workers - more than one in six from a workforce of 1.4 million - will get raises as a result. That money will be spent instantly and locally. That's why most states have minimum wage levels above the federal level - because they boost the economy, not the reverse.

Kansas has the lowest state minimum wage in the country: \$2.65 an hour. That's shameful. Raising that wage is the only way to bring thousands of full-time workers and their families above the federal poverty line.

*David Smith,
Lawrence*

<193 words>

#####