



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

Sample Letters to the Editor on Raising the Minimum Wage

Letters to the Editor should refer to an article in the paper you're responding to. Think about how you can connect news stories or opinion pieces to any of these topics. The texts below are suggestions – you can draw on them but to the greatest extent possible use your own words.

On Raising the Minimum Wage:

(Thanks to our friends at Half in Ten for providing content)

*[A good opening connects to a recent article. Was there a story about your Congressman speaking at a recess event? You can say you were disappointed (s)he didn't say anything about the minimum wage, or were pleased that (s)he did. Stories about use of emergency food or other hardships of poverty could prompt a letter about raising the minimum wage. An editorial or column about priorities for action could be criticized for not mentioning the minimum wage. Stories about rising corporate profits could lead you to say, "It's amazing that with record-breaking corporate profits, Congress is not acting to raise the minimum wage."]*Right now our economy isn't working for everyone – too many Americans are working full-time hours at multiple jobs that don't pay enough to lift their families out of poverty.

The federal minimum wage is stuck at \$7.25 per hour. That's \$15,080 annually for a full-time worker, far below the poverty line for a family of three. In the late 1960s, the minimum wage was sufficient to lift a family of three out of poverty. Had it been indexed to inflation it would now stand at more than \$10.70 per hour.

Fortunately, the Fair Minimum Wage Act would increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour and index it to inflation. It would boost the wages of 28 million workers—including 17 million women—by \$35 billion. More than 21 million children have at least one parent whose pay would go up as a result of passing this legislation. In **[your state]**, raising the wage will create **[enter your state data]** jobs and affect **[enter your state data]** workers. *[Use [Half in Ten's Minimum Wage Toolkit](#) for state information or [Oxfam America's interactive map](#) for information by congressional district.]*

It's long past time that Congress listens to the vast majority of the American people who support increasing the minimum wage to *at least* \$10.10 per hour. We need to grow our economy in a way that works for everyone, not just those at the very top. Restoring a strong minimum wage is one key step towards achieving that goal.

Other points about raising the minimum wage you could use:

- This would enable a full-time worker to earn \$19,777 annually, meaning that hard work would

once again lift a small family out of poverty. Raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour would also help those earning just above the minimum wage.

- Despite what opponents to raising the wage would have you believe, these workers aren't "teenagers flipping burgers": the average worker who would benefit from this wage increase is 35 years old.
- Over the past several decades, worker productivity has risen dramatically, but American workers aren't reaping the benefits. If the minimum wage had kept pace with increased worker productivity, it would be more \$18 per hour today. Today's workers are more educated and more productive than ever before, but the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour is 31 percent lower than its value in 1968. Workers earning the federal minimum wage haven't gotten a raise in five years.
- When low-wage workers make more money, they spend it on basic goods and services like housing, food, and gas. This boost in demand will help stimulate and grow the economy by \$32.6 billion. That money is funneled back to businesses large and small as they hire more workers to keep pace with increased demand, reinforcing a virtuous circle that will help build an economy that works for everyone. Raising the wage to \$10.10 will also save taxpayers \$46 billion over ten years as they'll no longer have to foot the bill for supplementing Americans' low wages that corporations can afford to pay.
- More than half of the states that raised the minimum wage during periods of high unemployment saw the unemployment rate decrease over the next 12 months. According to the Economic Policy Institute, raising the wage to \$10.10 will create 85,000 new full-time jobs. It will also reduce employee turnover, increase employee productivity and loyalty, and increase profits.

For **tips on writing and sending a Letter to the Editor**, see this [tip sheet](#) from our friends at NETWORK. Please **send copies of your letter** to CHN's Communications Associate Joanna Sandager at jsandager@chn.org.