



# American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

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## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

116<sup>th</sup> Congress

### The Fight for \$15: Raise the Wage

As America has lifted itself from the depths of the 2008 Great Recession, 99% of all new income has gone to the wealthiest one percent of Americans. All the while, the working class continue to fall further behind as income inequality explodes and wages stagnate.

American wages, and especially the federal minimum wage, remain inadequately low. At the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, a full-time worker earns only \$15,080 each year. The current federal minimum wage does not meet the current rate of inflation, causing a loss of individuals' purchasing power by 9.6%. It is unacceptable in the most prosperous nation on Earth that anyone working full-time, year round at minimum wage will fall below the federal poverty line. America can do better.

### A Rising Tide

Throughout the 20th Century, rising wages have lifted up families, businesses and communities nationwide. However, in recent decades as the American economy has expanded and workers produce more and more, the federal minimum wage has fallen drastically behind increases in workers' productivity. Furthermore, the federal minimum wage has been outpaced by inflation for decades and low wage workers' ability to provide for their families has suffered as a result.

The Fight for \$15 can boost our nation's economic activity by directly raising take home pay and spending capabilities for low wage workers.

There is broad support nationwide for raising the wage. A majority of surveyed Americans support a \$15 an hour minimum wage. 29 states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages above the federal \$7.25 threshold. Several states and cities are leading the way, implementing their own \$15 an hour minimum wage.

The rising tide of higher pay is also lifting businesses in these communities. Commenting on his increased sales after Seattle raised its minimum wage, a local entrepreneur stated, "It isn't because I'm such a great manager or smart guy, but the buying public has more money in their pocket."

### Opposition Claims Refuted

Opponents of raising the wage falsely claim that the minimum wage primarily impacts teenagers. In reality, 9 in 10 workers who stand to benefit from a \$15 minimum wage are over age 20, and the average age of impacted workers is 36. Further, working parents constitute over 27% of those who stand to benefit.

Counter to assertions by some, studies show that raising the minimum wages does not hinder job creation. In fact, a landmark study found economic activity, consumer spending, and employment actually increased after implementing the increase.

### Raise the Wage Act of 2019

The Raise the Wage Act of 2019 would incrementally raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025. Further, it would then be indexed to rise with inflation to prevent low wage workers from falling behind as they have in recent decades. Nearly one in three workers stand to benefit under the Raise the Wage Act.

The APWU endorses the Raise the Wage Act of 2019 (S. 150: Sponsor Sen. Bernie Sanders & H.R. 582: Sponsor Rep. Bobby Scott) and encourages lawmakers of all stripes to stand up for workers by cosponsoring this important legislation.

Contact the APWU Legislative and Political Department at (202) 842-4211 for more information  
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