

## "RAISE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE, CATHOLIC BISHOPS URGE CONGRESS"

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has long sought a raise in the minimum wage. As pastors, bishops see the tragic human and social consequences on individuals, their families, and society when workers cannot support themselves and their families by their own labor. The current minimum wage is still just \$5.15 an hour, which is \$10,700 a year for a full-time worker\*nearly \$6,000 below the poverty level for a family of three. The minimum wage needs to be raised not just for the goods and services a person can buy but for the self-esteem and self-worth it affords. We urge you to support H.R. 2, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007.

Work has a special place in Catholic social thought. Work is more than just a job; it is a reflection of human dignity and a way to contribute to the common good. Most importantly, it is the ordinary way people meet their material needs and community obligations. In Catholic teaching, the principle of a just wage is integral to our understanding of human work. Wages must be adequate for workers to provide for themselves and their families in dignity. The United States bishops, Conference has supported the minimum wage since its inception as a just means to protect the human rights and dignity of workers.

Raising the minimum wage is only one step needed to address the larger, more pressing problem of poverty in America. In our shelters and soup kitchens, in our parishes and schools, we see working families who can't make ends meet. We serve too many families where men and women work full time and still live in destitution. Congress needs to make budget and policy choices that will ensure adequate funding to help families escape joblessness, move beyond welfare, choose decent education for their children, gain needed health care coverage, and overcome hunger and homelessness. Our nation needs a persistent and determined effort to overcome poverty. We hope you will work together across partisan and ideological lines to shape a comprehensive strategy and common commitment to lift all of our brothers and sisters out of poverty.

In his Encyclical, God is Love, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that: „The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics\*. Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now.%o (# 28)

We renew our support for an increase in the minimum wage. For us, it is a matter of simple justice for a decent society.

#####

07-008

SEC,PRNewswire,CNS,RNS,Crux