



**National  
Urban League**

**To Be Equal #22**

**May 29, 2013**

**Raise the Minimum Wage Now**

Marc Morial  
President and CEO  
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*"Despite working a full-time job, many low-wage workers still live in poverty. This isn't right."*  
Rep. George Miller

In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on income inequality in America, most notably with the Occupy Wall Street movement, which has lost much of its momentum. But what might have been lost in that principled attempt to point out the excesses of Wall Street and the growing power of the 1%, is the importance of raising the living standards of the working poor through a long overdue raise in the minimum wage. Now those voices are rising too.

The current minimum wage is \$7.25. The last increase was in 2009. If it had kept up with inflation since 1968, it would be \$10.59 today. As reported in the New York Times, "In the United States, the average income of the richest 10 percent of the population has risen to 14 times that of the poorest 10 percent." Considering that the majority of jobs created since the recession have been in low wage occupations, it is clear that raising the minimum wage is essential to slowing the trend of growing wage inequality.

During his State of the Union Address, President Obama put a face on the growing chasm between the "haves" and "have nots" with a modest proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$9 an hour by 2015, and index it to inflation thereafter. He said, "Let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full time should have to live in poverty...This single step would raise the incomes of millions of working families. It could mean the difference between groceries or the food bank; rent or eviction; scraping by or finally getting ahead. For businesses across the country, it would mean customers with more money in their pockets."

In March, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin and California Representative, George Miller upped the ante by introducing the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013, which would take the Federal minimum wage to \$10.10, index it to inflation, and also gradually elevate the minimum wage for tipped workers—which currently stands at just \$2.13 an hour—for the first time in more than 20 years, to 70% of the regular minimum wage. The National Urban League wholeheartedly

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supports the Harkin-Miller bill. It would result in 30 million people receiving a raise, nearly half of whom would be people of color.

We are pleased that a growing group of supporters stands with us, including U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce CEO Margot Dorfman. As Rep. Miller noted, "Raising the minimum wage is especially critical for working women who make up a disproportionate share of minimum wage workers today." Margot Dorfman echoed that view, adding, "Raising the minimum wage puts dollars in the pockets of people who are by necessity most likely to spend them immediately at the grocery store, the childcare provider, the auto-repair shop and other local businesses. Raising the minimum wage boosts the economy from the bottom up, which is exactly what we need to repower our economy and create lasting jobs." We agree. It's time to put partisan politics aside and do what's right for the working poor and for our economy. Raise the minimum wage now.

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