

How to Talk About Raising Wages

Four Key Sentences on Raising Wages

- By raising the minimum wage so that families can meet the basics, their spending will boost Main Street, create jobs and help our communities thrive.
- Powerful corporations use their influence to hold down wages and benefits so working people can't meet the basics to care for and support their families.
- It's ridiculous that even jobs like nursing assistants, preschool teachers, and paramedics pay low wages – much less than \$15 an hour.
- Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future.

Our Core Story – Three Short Versions

- By raising the minimum wage so that families can meet the basics, their spending will boost Main Street, create jobs and help our communities thrive.
- It's only right that full time jobs should at least pay enough for people to afford the basics, and when people have more money to spend it boosts the economy and build thriving communities.
- Increasing wages is both fair and smart. It is fair because no one who works full-time should live in poverty and it's smart because when people have more money to spend, it boosts local economies and creates jobs and thriving communities.

For examples or support in using these messages in communications – opeds, speeches, legislative testimony and more – please contact:

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Progressive Economic Story on Raising Wages

- We need an economy that works for all of us, not just the wealthy. But today working families are getting squeezed. Powerful corporations are cutting our wages and benefit so people can't even meet the basics. These economy-busting jobs are stalling our state's economy and hurting our communities. It's time we took steps to raise the minimum so working people can care for and support their families. Working families and middle-class are the engines of the economy. When we raise the minimum wage so that families are paid enough to afford the basics, their spending boosts Main Street, creates jobs and helps our communities to thrive. Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future. It's time we raised the minimum wage!

Three Other Key Points to Make

- It's ridiculous that even jobs like nursing assistants, preschool teachers, and paramedics pay low wages – much less than \$15 an hour. We should value working people more than that.
- The minimum wage is so low, that many full time workers qualify for food stamps and other public assistance. Taxpayers shouldn't subsidize low wage employers; corporations should pay workers enough to live on.
- Low wages are leaving our state far behind. Around the country, states and cities are raising the minimum wage, pouring billions of dollars into their local economies and helping working people meet the basics to care for and support their families. Since 2014, sixteen states have increased the minimum wage. Every day that our state waits means lost income to families, businesses and our state's economy.

How To Talk About Workers Who Rely On Public Support

We often make the argument that workers who get low wages qualify for food stamps and other public programs. When we do, it's important not to make it sound like there's something wrong with these programs or the people who use them. For example, never say "people who are on public assistance." It's not a drug! Make it clear who is to blame and that the workers are being responsible.

Say this: Big corporations pay wages that are so low that their workers rely on public supports like food stamps just to afford the basics.



Messages for Specific Audiences

Minimum wage message for women and families: Raising the minimum wage will help women and families meet the basics to care and support our families. More than half of Americans who will get a raise are women and that includes millions of working moms and single moms. By raising the minimum wage, we'll take a major step toward lowering the imbalance between what men and women get paid for the same work. Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future.

Minimum wage message for people of color: Almost half of Americans who will earn more when the minimum wage is raised are people of color. Raising the minimum wage will help people of color care for and support their families and build strong communities.

Minimum wage message for young people: Raising the minimum wage will help young people starting out in life, meet the basics. Too many young people are stuck at low-wage jobs, even after their teen years. In fact, nine-in-ten Americans who will earn more when the minimum wage is raised are 20 years and older. Raising the minimum wage will give young people in [State] a boost when they are just getting started, leading to better earnings that will boost our state's economy now and for years to come.

Minimum wage message for union members: There are good reasons that union members have always led the fight to increase the minimum wage. Working people understand that every job should pay enough for families to meet the basics. And that it's ridiculous that even jobs like nursing assistants, pre-school teachers and paramedics pay low wages – much less than \$15. We should value working people more than that. Union members also understand that when we raise the wage floor, it increases our power to negotiate together for higher wages for the skilled, valuable work we do. The more money we put in the pockets of working people, the more our spending boosts Main Street, creates jobs and helps our communities thrive.

Message for small businesses: Raising the minimum wage will level the playing field for our small businesses, who do the right thing by paying higher wages than big, out of state corporations. Our small businesses pay better because we understand that when our employees earn more, that boosts Main Street and builds thriving communities in our state. Raising the minimum wage will force out of state corporations to start contributing to our state too.

Important Lesson On Telling Personal Stories About Minimum Wage!!!

Many people often want to blame the worker, look for some personal shortcoming. But if we provide the context upfront, then people hear the personal story differently. So before every personal story, remember to say: "Powerful corporations use their influence to cut wages and benefits so people can not meet the basics." And if you can tell the story so that it fills in that statement, so much the better!

For specific data on who will benefit from raising the minimum wage in your state go to: <http://www.epi.org/files/2015/revised-minimum-wage-state-tables.pdf>



Messages on eliminating the sub-minimum tipped wage

- All workers should get the guarantee of a minimum wage to meet the basics, and that includes workers who get tips who are working to care and support their families. But people who work in restaurants at a subminimum wage get paid so little that they rely on food stamps twice as often as everyone else. And when mostly women work at tipped jobs, ending the subminimum tipped wage will help end the imbalance between what women and men get paid. It's time we ended the subminimum wage and lifted the wage floor so that every worker can care and support their families.
- The restaurant industry and local economies are booming in states that have no sub-minimum wage for tipped workers. When we raise the minimum wage for all workers, their spending boosts Main Street, creates jobs and helps our communities to thrive.

Questions and Answers with Some Key Facts On Raising the Minimum Wage

The following are examples of how you can use the messaging when you respond to common claims by opponents.

“Businesses, not government, should be setting wages - they know best what they can afford.”

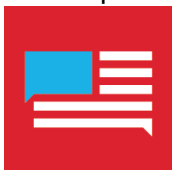
- Powerful corporations are cutting our wages and benefits so people can't even meet the basics. Increasing the minimum wage raises wages for millions of Americans, boosting the economy and building stronger communities.
 - CEO went up 725% over the last 30 years, while average wages were flat.
 - If economic progress had been shared by fairly with workers, the minimum wage now would be over \$18 an hour.

“Raising the minimum wage will cost jobs.”

- Numerous studies – based on real minimum wage increases – show that increases in the minimum wage will not cause employers to eliminate jobs. Instead, it will increase consumer demand, which will create more jobs. Working families will have a little more money to spend and local businesses will benefit from it. It's a win-win for everybody.
- The claim that if wages go up, employment goes down, is an intimidation tactic that powerful corporations use to bully working people, so that CEOs will get more and the rest of us will get less.

“Raising the minimum wage will hurt small business.”

- Putting more money in the pockets of workers to spend in our communities boosts small businesses. Research shows that small businesses pay more than big corporations for the same jobs. And it's important to remember that two-out-of three workers who get paid the minimum wage work for big businesses, which are making record profits.



“Minimum wage workers are mostly teenagers.”

- Too many working families are working at the minimum wage, making it tough to meet the basics. In fact, nine-in-ten of those who would earn more are 20 years and older, including millions of parents. Increasing the minimum wage will give millions of families a boost, in turn boosting the economy and building stronger communities.

Combining Minimum Wage and Paid Sick Days And Family Leave

Key Message: We need economy boosting jobs, with a higher minimum wage and paid sick days and family leave. Jobs that will allow us to care and support our families in strong communities.

Key message (30 seconds): Working families and the middle-class are getting crushed. Powerful corporations are cutting our wages and benefits so people can't even meet the basics. These economy-busting jobs are stalling our economy and hurting our communities. It's up to us, through our government, to maintain a wage and benefit floor, so people can care for and support their families. We can boost the economy by increasing the minimum wage for millions of Americans. And we can make sure that every job includes paid sick days and family leave, so no American has to choose between their jobs and caring for their families.

Message on Paid Leave Policies: Powerful corporations are cutting our wages and benefits so people can't even meet the basics to care for and support our families. For millions of Americans, taking time off from work due to illness or a family emergency means sacrificing much needed income and risking losing a job. We need economy boosting jobs, with paid sick days and family leave, so no American has to choose between their jobs and caring for their families.

Combined for women: It's up to us to maintain a wage and benefit floor, so people can care for and support their families. Six out of ten Americans who work for low wages are women, including millions of working moms, very few of whom earn paid sick days or family leave. Every working parent should get paid enough and have the flexibility at work to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future.

Combined for people of color: It's up to us to maintain a wage and benefit floor, so people can care for and support their families. Nearly four out of ten Americans who work at low wage jobs are people of color – jobs where they are not allowed to earn paid sick days. Economy boosting jobs, with a higher minimum wage and paid sick days and family leave, will help all Americans, including people of color, care and support their families and build thriving communities.

