

## Women of Color and the Minimum Wage

Raising the federal minimum wage is a critical civil rights issue and will make a significant difference in the lives of millions of low-wage workers and their families. Women of color are disproportionately driven into poverty by low wages. Increasing wages would greatly benefit not only women of color but the entire United States economy.

Women of color are disproportionately represented among the 30 million Americans who will benefit from a higher minimum wage, making it easier for working families to make ends meet. Raising the minimum wage will also help close the gender wage gap.

- Women comprise 49 percent of U.S. workers, yet make up 56 percent of workers who would be affected by a potential minimum-wage increase.<sup>1</sup>
- An increase in the minimum wage to \$10.10 would either directly or indirectly raise the wages of more than 2.4 million African-American female workers and 3.3 million Latina workers.<sup>2</sup>
- The average wage gap in states with a minimum wage at or above \$8.00 is 22 percent smaller than the average wage gap in states with a \$7.25 minimum wage.<sup>3</sup>
- Women made up about two-thirds of all workers who were paid minimum wage or less in 2012, and 61 percent of full-time minimum-wage workers. Women were also nearly two-thirds of workers in tipped occupations in 2012.<sup>4</sup>
- Women of color are disproportionately represented among female minimum wage workers. Nearly four in ten female minimum wage workers are women of color, compared to just over one-third of working women overall.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2012, women working full time, year-round were typically paid 77 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts, and this gap was even wider for women of color: African-American women typically made 64 cents, and Hispanic women only 54 cents, for every dollar paid to their White, non-Hispanic male counterparts.<sup>6</sup>
- An increase in the minimum wage to \$10.10 would either directly or indirectly raise the wages of more than 1.4 million women of color who are single parents.<sup>7</sup>

The Minimum Wage Fairness Act<sup>8</sup> would:

- raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 by 2016, in three increments of 95 cents each;
- adjust the minimum wage each year to keep pace with the rising cost of living;



**“If people aren’t paid adequately to work, society will pay in other ways... You will pay to mend broken lives or by incarceration.”**

*- Coretta Scott King*

- and raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, which has been frozen at a meager \$2.13 per hour for more than 20 years.

A \$10.10 minimum wage would mean higher earnings for 17 million workers<sup>9</sup> with little to no effect on employment,<sup>10</sup> and could lift nearly five million Americans out of poverty.<sup>11</sup>

*The Leadership Conference Education Fund builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. The Education Fund’s campaigns empower and mobilize advocates around the country to push for progressive change in the United States.*

*The YWCA is the voice for every woman. For more than 150 years, the YWCA has spoken out and taken action on behalf of women and girls. The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Over 2 million people participate each year in YWCA programs at more than 1,300 locations across the U.S.*

<sup>1</sup><http://www.epi.org/blog/10-10-minimum-wage-give-economy-wage-workers/>.

<sup>2</sup>Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/green\\_minimumwageandwagegapfebruary\\_2014\\_update.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/green_minimumwageandwagegapfebruary_2014_update.pdf).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata.

<sup>8</sup><http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c113:S.1737:>

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4075#\\_ftn10](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4075#_ftn10).

<sup>10</sup><http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>[https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15038936/Dube\\_MinimumWagesFamilyIncomes.pdf](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15038936/Dube_MinimumWagesFamilyIncomes.pdf).