



Make Work Work. Support a Living Wage!

Even when Congress chooses to raise the minimum wage, a full-time minimum wage job is still not enough to keep a family out of poverty. A *living wage* is needed.

Here are three things you can do to help promote a living wage in the United States:

1. Participate in Living Wage Days

Let Justice Roll, a coalition of faith groups working on wage fairness, is hosting Living Wage Days October 14-15 to highlight the need for wages that keep people out of poverty.

Visit www.letjusticeroll.org to learn more.

2. Help local labor organizing efforts

Often, the best way to ensure good wages and working conditions is to give employees the opportunity to join a union. Interfaith Worker Justice (www.iwj.org) has online resources about building partnerships between organized labor and the religious community.

Check out “Giving Life to a Living Wage” (www.iwj.org/pdf/livingwage.pdf)

3. Support pro-worker legislators

If your senators or representative support workers, particularly if they support a raise in the minimum wage, thank them!

Call the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121) or go to the NETWORK Web site (www.networklobby.org) to connect to your elected officials and find out their opinion on wage issues. Let them know you support a living wage.

Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) has been a perennial champion of fair pay for workers. His office has just issued a report stating that on average, CEOs earn more before their first lunch break than a minimum wage worker earns in the entire year! (www.kennedy.senate.gov/downloads/fairsharereport.pdf)

This report can be a valuable resource when talking with your elected officials.

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25 E Street NW, Suite 200 • Washington DC 20001
202-347-9797 • www.networklobby.org

Catholic Social Tradition and Workers' Rights

Many Sources of Inspiration

Catholic social tradition supports the rights of workers to organize, to receive fair wages, and to work in a dignified environment. In Scripture, church teachings and the actions of courageous activists, the treatment of workers has long been a central concern.

Scripture

The Scriptures are filled with references to the just treatment of workers and all exploited people. Over and over again, we hear that the measure of a just society is how it treats those who are poor and those in society who do not have access to the same power as the elites. These vulnerable groups get special attention in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament to protect them from exploitation.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15, Jeremiah 22:13, Malachi 3:5, James 5:1-5

Church Documents

When Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, he renewed what we now know as Catholic social tradition. Labor issues and the rights of workers take center stage in that foundational document. Since then, the church has continued its call for just treatment of workers, including a living wage. Many documents reference this moral imperative.

Leo XII – Rerum Novarum

*USCCB – Economic Justice for All (1986) and
A Catholic Framework for Economic Life (1996)*

John Paul II – Laborum Exercens (1981)

Second Vatican Council – Gaudium et Spes (1965)

Lay Leadership

The witness of dedicated lay people is a vital component of our Catholic social tradition. The work of courageous people, including committed Catholics like Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and Cesar Chavez, has changed our nation's laws and improved the lives of countless workers.

www.catholicworker.org (information about Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin),

www.ufw.org (the labor union Cesar Chavez co-founded)

Information compiled by former NETWORK Lobby Associate Elizabeth Dahlman

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