

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **TODAY AMERICA GETS A RAISE**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Welcome to Pay Raise Day 2007! We did it! After ten long years, today America gets a raise! It's a special day for working families, and I'm honored to be here with you.

We have so many leaders here today who have dedicated their lives to the nation's workers – John Sweeney, Anna Burger, Paul Sherry, Maude Hurd, Kim Gandy, William McNary, Michael Goodwin, many other champions for working families. My thanks to them, and to each and every one of you who have joined us here today.

You were the true soldiers in this great battle for fairness and justice. You pounded the pavements, you knocked on doors, you made the phone calls to send out the message that no one in America who works for a living should have to live in poverty!

In the ten years that we worked to get this bill passed, I met countless minimum wage workers. I heard their stories of struggle and survival:

How they worked more than one job. How they saved every penny they could. How they had to make impossible choices every day about what food they could afford to buy and what bills they could afford pay.

Today I'm thinking of each of them - the 13 million Americans who will see more money in their paychecks for the first time in a decade under this bill. They will have a few more dollars to spend on the essentials of life, or a few more hours to spend time with their families. 6 million children will have better food, better health, and better opportunities for the future.

Don't let anyone tell you that what we do here in Washington doesn't make a difference to real people. 6 million children with a brighter future – that's the difference having a Democratic Congress makes!

We've overcome many obstacles. We've faced every tactic in the Republican anti-worker playbook – to get this minimum wage increase across the finish line. And let me assure you here today, we have only just begun to fight!!!

We need your help just as much in the battles ahead.

- Will you join us in the fight for affordable health care?
- Will you join us in the fight for better, safer schools?
- Will you join us in the fight to create more good American jobs?
- Will you join us in the fight to make sure minimum wage workers are never left behind again?

You and I know how important these battles are. You and I know we're right. And we know that if we keep working hard together, the future of working Americans will only get brighter! Thank you very much.

**THE IMPACT OF THE FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT**

**Increasing the minimum wage will make an immediate and significant difference in the lives of millions of hard-working Americans.**

- An estimated 13 million Americans will benefit from an increase to \$7.25 an hour – 5.6 million directly, and another 7.4 million indirectly. More than sixty percent of these workers are women, and almost forty percent are people of color.
  
- Almost eighty percent of those who benefit are adult workers, not teenagers seeking pocket change.
  
- This raise means that minimum wage earners will almost immediately earn an additional \$1,500 to help support their families. When the full increase takes effect in 2009, these workers will see a total increase of \$4,400 per year – enough for a low-income family of three to buy:
  - 15 months of groceries
  - 19 months of utilities
  - 8 months of rent
  - Over two years of health care
  - 20 months of child care
  - 30 months of college tuition at a public, 2 year college

**Increasing the minimum wage will help combat poverty in our nation.**

- The number of Americans in poverty has increased by 5.4 million since President Bush took office. 37 million Americans currently live in poverty, including 13 million children.
  
- Among full-time, year-round workers, poverty has increased by 50 percent since the late 1970s.
  
- This increase to the minimum wage, combined with the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the food stamps program, will bring a family of four above the poverty line. It will benefit an estimated 6.4 million children of low-income workers.
  
- Britain has the second largest economy in Europe (after Germany). They implemented a minimum wage in 1999 that has had no adverse employment effects, and has lifted 1.8 million British children out of poverty. They raised their minimum wage to about \$9.58 per hour last year, and they are planning to raise this rate to about \$9.96 in October of this year.

## **Increasing the minimum wage restores lost value.**

Every day minimum wage workers waited for a raise, the minimum wage lost value, and workers have fallen farther and farther behind. This raise restores the purchasing power of minimum wage workers.

- Since the minimum wage was last raised in 1997, its real value has eroded by 22 percent. Before this raise, minimum wage workers had lost all of the gains of the 1996-1997 increase.
- Even with this increase, the real value of the minimum wage will still be \$2.25 below what it was at its peak in 1968. To have the purchasing power it had in 1968, the minimum wage would have to be \$9.50 an hour today, not \$5.15.

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