

From the National Employment Law Project  
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**New Poll: Two-Thirds of Americans Support Minimum Wage Increase**  
*Strong Majority Wants to Raise and Index Minimum Wage*

Washington, DC – A [new poll](#) shows that fully two-thirds of Americans support a robust increase in the minimum wage. The survey, released yesterday by the Public Religion Research Institute, finds that 67 percent of Americans support gradually raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to at least \$10.00 an hour, and automatically adjusting or “indexing” it each year so that it keeps pace with the cost of living.

“This poll is yet another affirmation that maintaining a strong minimum wage is a core American value. Americans overwhelmingly support a minimum wage rate that will help working families make ends meet and provide the boost the economy needs for full recovery,” said National Employment Law Project Executive Director Christine Owens.

This latest indicator of strong public support comes on the heels of nearly a year of attacks designed to lower the minimum wage, despite the fact that an individual earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 makes roughly \$15,000 a year for full-time work. The survey of over 3,000 Americans was conducted last month and included a range of questions on economic and social issues.

The minimum wage has served as a critical wage floor for over seventy years, helping hardworking individuals provide for their families. Enacted in 1938, the minimum wage is one of the nation’s oldest core labor standards. The Supreme Court affirmed its constitutionality in 1942, ruling in *United States v. Darby Lumber Co.*<sup>i</sup> that the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution provides Congress with the power to regulate employment conditions, including setting a minimum wage, outlawing child labor and establishing overtime protections.

To the detriment of working families, the value of the minimum wage has declined significantly since the late 1960's, as irregular and infrequent increases have failed to keep up with increases in the cost of living. The minimum wage would be over \$10.00 an hour if it had kept pace with the cost of living over the past forty years. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have raised their minimum wages above the federal level,<sup>ii</sup> and ten states automatically adjust their minimum wages each year to rise with the cost of living.<sup>iii</sup>

Raising the minimum wage would help working families meet their basic needs and also help foster economic recovery. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that last year's 70-cent increase in the federal minimum wage generated \$5.5 billion in new consumer spending.<sup>iv</sup>

“We need to be focusing on ways to boost consumer spending to bolster economic growth, and a strong minimum wage is a key part of that strategy,” said Owens.

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<sup>i</sup> [312 U.S. 100 \(1941\)](#).

<sup>ii</sup> Alaska, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington and the District of Columbia.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont and Washington.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Kai Filion, “A Stealthy Stimulus: How boosting the minimum wage is helping to support the economy,” Economic Policy Institute, Issue Brief #255 (May 28, 2009).