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LEADING EXPERTS ON WORK AND THE ECONOMY LAY OUT 10 WAYS TO REBUILD MIDDLE CLASS

Concrete Roadmap to Create and Improve Good Jobs, Tackle Inequality

WASHINGTON, DC – More than 20 of America’s leading organizations on work and the economy today released a plan featuring [10 ways to rebuild America’s middle class](#). With both Presidential candidates highlighting the issues of jobs and the economy, the new report details ten concrete proposals to strengthen the economy for the long term by creating good jobs and addressing the economic insecurity that has spread to millions of U.S. families. The recommendations follow [several recent studies](#) that indicate the economy is headed toward even greater inequality as middle-class jobs become more and more scarce.

“For a lot of Americans, simply having a job no longer means you’ll be able to support a family or pay for your basic needs,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “We have a low-wage recovery and most new jobs in the next decade are expected to follow the same path. If we are going to rebuild the middle class and restore national prosperity, we need to make today’s jobs better and tomorrow’s jobs good.”

The report, “[10 Ways to Rebuild the Middle Class for Hard Working Americans: Making Work Pay in the 21st Century](#),” identifies the following steps to improve the long-term prospects for the nation’s working families and the U.S. economy:

1. **MAKE EVERY JOB A GOOD JOB.** The majority of the high-growth jobs in America – retail sales, home health and personal aides and food prep workers – pay very low wages and provide little chance of promotion. A Department of Labor proposal – just one of the fixes for this problem – would expand protections to the nation’s 2.5 million home care workers, who work in one of the fastest-growing job categories but are excluded from minimum wage and overtime laws.
2. **FIX THE MINIMUM WAGE.** The Fair Minimum Wage Act would restore the lost value of the minimum wage, index it to inflation and raise the tipped-worker wage – increasing take home pay for 28 million hardworking Americans and boosting consumer spending and job creation.
3. **SAVE GOOD PUBLIC AND PRIVATE JOBS.** Federal, state and local governments have shrunk their workforces by 580,000 since the recession ended in 2009. And the private sector has shipped 1.2 million jobs overseas since 2008. Federal funds should be provided to state and local governments to hire back teachers, firefighters and other public employees. And the government should end tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas.
4. **ENSURE HEALTH AND RETIREMENT SECURITY.** Strengthen the partnership between employers, workers and the public by implementing the Affordable Care Act, protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security and establishing new retirement accounts for those workers who rely now just on Social Security.

5. **UPHOLD THE FREEDOM TO JOIN A UNION.** Outdated laws and corporate-driven policies have severely weakened the ability of workers to freely join together and collectively bargain. These trends have driven down wages and benefits. Fix the National Labor Relations Act to create a fair process for workers to choose union representation and restore the freedom to bargain collectively.
6. **MAKE THE MODERN WORKPLACE PRO-FAMILY.** The rules of the workplace haven't kept pace with the changing economy. Earned sick days and affordable family leave are indispensable to the health of today's workforce, our communities and economy. The Healthy Families Act would give 90% of private sector workers (in businesses of 15 or more) the ability to earn up to seven paid sick days each year to deal with personal or family illness or seek medical care.
7. **STOP WAGE THEFT.** Strengthen and enforce the laws against wage theft. By paying workers less than the minimum wage, not paying for overtime and sometimes not paying workers at all, unscrupulous employers are cheating workers and dragging down wages for the entire low-wage workforce.
8. **REQUIRE THAT YOUR BOSS BE YOUR EMPLOYER.** More and more companies are hiring permanent temp workers, paying temps and part-timers at a lower rate and giving fewer or no benefits, and misclassifying employees as independent contractors. The Department of Labor and IRS should vigorously enforce the laws meant to stop employers from mistreating actual employees.
9. **GIVE UNEMPLOYED JOB-SEEKERS A REAL, FRESH START.** Reauthorize federal unemployment insurance for 2013 and pass the Fair Employment Opportunity Act to end job market practices that discriminate against unemployed job seekers.
10. **TOUGHEN LAWS PROTECTING WORKER SAFETY AND HEALTH.** Millions of workers are injured or made sick on the job every year, and thousands die as a result. Enacting the Protect American Workers Act, for example, would modernize the Occupational Safety and Health Act to improve work safety and enforcement.

"In these tough economic times, common-sense policies like paid sick days are crucial for working families struggling to stay afloat and take care of their loved ones," said Ellen Bravo, **executive director of [Family Values @ Work](#)**, a national consortium of state and local coalitions working for paid sick days and paid family leave policies. "The middle class is the engine of our economy. We can't get that engine going again if workers lose jobs and income for being a good parent or following doctor's orders."

The groups issuing the report are 9to5, National Association of Working Women, AFL-CIO, American Rights at Work, Blue-Green Alliance, Campaign for America's Future, Caring Across Generations, Center for Community Change, Change To Win, Families Values @ Work, Interfaith Workers Justice, Jobs with Justice, Los Angeles Alliance for the New Economy, National Day Labor Organizing Network, National Partnership for Women & Families, National Employment Law Project, Partnership for Working Families, Progressive States Network, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, SEIU, USAction, Wider Opportunities for Women and Working America.

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