

# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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## **LEGISLATIVE ALERT!**

(202) 637-5090

June 22, 2006

Dear Representative:

Today we have received encouraging reports that the House of Representatives may soon consider legislation to increase the federal minimum wage. We are writing to urge the House to increase the minimum wage by \$2.10, rather than use “poison pills” and parliamentary maneuvers to prevent a \$2.10 increase from becoming law.

Legislation that is seriously intended to meet the needs of working Americans must raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25, without “poison pills” designed to prevent its passage. A majority of the Senate – 53 senators – now supports a clean \$2.10 increase in the minimum wage. It is widely believed that a majority of the House also supports a clean \$2.10 increase. Last week a bipartisan majority of the House Appropriations Committee approved a clean \$2.10 increase. There is no good reason for preventing a House vote on a clean \$2.10 increase in the minimum wage, which could then easily become law.

We are very concerned that the House will disregard the wishes of a majority of Congress -- not to mention the overwhelming majority of Americans -- by only allowing consideration of an alternative minimum wage bill designed never to become law. For example, yesterday the Senate soundly rejected just such a sham proposal, the Enzi amendment, which stands no chance of becoming law because it is larded with outrageous “poison pills.”

The Enzi amendment would hurt far more workers than it helps by undermining critical wage and hour protections for millions of workers. The Enzi amendment would allow employers to cut a worker's overtime pay by \$3,000 per year by substituting an 80-hour two-week work period for the traditional 40-hour workweek. The Enzi amendment would cut pay by as much as \$5.50 an hour for tipped workers, by nullifying minimum wage protections for tipped workers under state law. And the Enzi amendment would strip minimum wage and overtime eligibility from over 7 million workers, far more than the 1.8 million workers who would benefit from a meager \$1.10 increase in the minimum wage.

A \$2.10 increase in the minimum wage is a far more substantial measure that would benefit far more workers. Increasing the minimum wage to \$7.25 in three steps over 26 months would directly benefit 7.3 million workers, and create indirect spillover effects for another 8.2 million. Because increasing the minimum wage is a moral imperative and a statement about how we as a society value hard work, half-measures designed to benefit as few workers as possible are simply inadequate.

“Poison pills” that negate the benefits of a minimum wage increase are designed to provoke opposition, not to address the needs of working people. Working Americans should not have to sacrifice wage and hour protections every time the minimum wage is increased, because minimum wage increases merely restore the value that has been lost to inflation.

Last week the House cleared the way for another \$3,300 congressional pay raise, the ninth pay raise Congress has approved for itself since it last increased the minimum wage. This week the House will consider partial repeal of the estate tax, which will benefit a handful of the wealthiest families in America. If Congress can pay such careful attention to its own financial needs and the financial needs of the wealthiest 0.3 percent of Americans, it can surely find the time necessary to vote on legislation to address the needs of Americans who earn wages for a living. There is simply no excuse for using parliamentary maneuvers and “poison pills” to prevent a clean vote on a clean \$2.10 increase in the minimum wage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director  
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION