

## **URGE CONGRESS TO INCREASE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE**

On May 18, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Miller (D-CA) introduced the bicameral Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005, which would raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour in three steps - \$5.85 60 days after enactment; \$6.55 one year later, and \$7.25 one year after that. The current minimum wage is \$5.15 and has not been increased since 1997.

"In light of the growing disparity in household income and the past positions of the General Assembly," the 200th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) "urge[d] the President and Congress of the United States to raise the minimum wage to its historical level of 50 percent of the average non-supervisory, nonagricultural wage and provide for regular increases that will keep the minimum wage at an adequate level to lift people out of poverty." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly earning of production workers was \$15.85 in 2004.

The 200th Assembly also urged the President and Congress "to oppose further cuts in social programs that benefit poor people and to increase support for programs unable to serve all eligible persons due to lack of funds." (Minutes, PC(USA), p. 364)

Minimum wage employees working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earn \$10,700 a year, \$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. The current minimum wage fails to provide enough income to enable minimum wage workers to afford adequate housing in any area of this country.

Raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour will mean an additional \$4,370 a year to help minimum wage earners support their families. That's enough for a minimum wage family to buy

- \*Almost two years of child care
- \*Full tuition for a community college degree
- \*A year and a half of heat and electricity
- \*More than a year of groceries
- \*More than 9 months of rent

Contact your Members of Congress and urge them to support the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005.

Published by the Stewardship of Public Life (SPL) advocacy program of the Washington Office, Presbyterian Church (USA), 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 543-1126, [www.pcusa.org/washington](http://www.pcusa.org/washington). For more information about the content of this article, please e-mail Carolyn Race, at [crace@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:crace@ctr.pcusa.org).

Dear Senator:

As a Presbyterian, I am writing to urge you to support the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005. The federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour has not increased since 1997. Minimum wage employees working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earn \$10,700 a year, \$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. The current minimum wage fails to provide enough income to enable minimum wage workers to afford adequate housing in any area of this country.

My denomination's General Assembly passed a resolution calling on Congress to "provide for regular increases that will keep the minimum wage at an adequate level to lift people out of poverty."

A fair increase in the minimum wage is overdue. Please act quickly to pass a minimum wage increase - so that no one who works for a living lives in poverty. Thank you.