



November 7, 2005

Dear Members of Congress:

As leaders of our respective faith communities, we call on Congress to raise the federal minimum wage in the 109<sup>th</sup> session. For too long, the ranks of the working poor have grown in this country. For too long, low-wage workers have been unable to support themselves and their families, even though they work several jobs, trying to make ends meet. Poverty has become a disease, striking at the very heart of the United States, attacking the most vulnerable, even as the wealthy few continue to accumulate far more than their reasonable share. It is unacceptable that such a state of affairs be allowed to continue, as year after year, Congress fails to pass an increase in the federal minimum wage.

Prophetic voices throughout the ages have called upon their nations to show justice to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. The Prophet Amos exhorts the people of Israel, "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Then, and now, the assembled people of God are called upon to establish justice for low-wage workers, whose cries are so often heard across our land.

The situation among America's minimum wage workers is particularly dire. A minimum wage employee – making \$5.15 an hour, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns \$10,700 a year – \$5,000 below the federal poverty line for a family of three. The real value of the minimum wage today is nearly \$4.00 less than it was in 1968. Indeed, in order for the minimum wage to have the same purchasing power as it did in 1968, the federal minimum would have to be raised to more than \$9.00. This situation is unconscionable, as the wealth of our nation continues to be built on the backs of the working poor.

In his *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, our modern-day prophet, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., says, "There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we now have the resources to get rid of it." It is time to heed the call of the prophets, both ancient and modern. It is time to recognize that a minimum wage should be a fair, just, and living wage.

Signed,

Kim Bobo  
Executive Director of Interfaith Worker Justice

The Reverend Dr. Robert W. Edgar  
General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ

The Reverend C. Welton Gaddy  
President of The Interfaith Alliance and the Interfaith Alliance Foundation

The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold  
Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church

The Reverend Dr. Stan Hastey  
Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists

James E. Hug, S.J.  
President of Center of Concern

The Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Reverend Timothy McDonald III and the Reverend Dr. Robert P. Shine, Sr.  
Chair and Vice-Chair of African American Ministers in Action

Mary Ellen McNish  
General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee

Bishop William B. Oden  
Head of Communion and Ecumenical Officer of the United Methodist Church

Bishop Roy Riley  
Chair of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Conference of Bishops

Rabbi David Saperstein  
Director and Counsel of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Alexander Sharp  
Executive Director of Protestants for the Common Good

The Reverend William G. Sinkford  
President of the Unitarian Universalist Association

The Reverend John H. Thomas  
General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ

The Reverend Romal J. Tune  
CEO of Clergy Strategic Alliances, LLC

The Reverend Dr. Sharon Watkins  
General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rabbi Eric Yoffie  
President of the Union for Reform Judaism

Scott D. Anderson  
Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches

The Reverend John Boonstra  
Executive Minister of the Washington State Association of Churches

The Reverend Albert G. Cohen  
Executive Director of the Southern California Ecumenical Council

The Reverend Stephen Copley  
President of the Arkansas Interfaith Conference

The Reverend Dr. Barbara Dua  
Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Churches

The Reverend Nancy Jo Kemper  
Executive Director of the Kentucky Council of Churches

David Lamarre-Vincent  
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The Reverend J. George Reed  
Executive Director of the North Carolina Council of Churches

The Reverend Dr. Stephen J. Sidorak, Jr.  
Executive Director of the Christian Conference of Connecticut

The Reverend C. Douglas Smith  
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The Reverend Dennis Sparks  
Executive Director of the West Virginia Council of Churches

The Reverend Sandra L. Strauss  
Director of Public Advocacy of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches

The Reverend Rebecca Tollefson  
Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Churches