

United Methodist Women *Living Wage for All* Campaign

What Will It Take? Many Entry Points

United Methodist Women's Living Wage for All Campaign seeks to engage members as allies in passing state legislation that lays the base for a living wage for everyone.

The living wage is more than the minimum wage—it's what it takes for a family to meet basic needs of housing, food, transportation, utilities, etc., in their locale (see unitedmethodistwomen.org/living-wage-map to find out the living wage in your state.) According to MIT, the national living wage is calculated at \$67,000 per year before taxes for a family of four with *two* workers, both working at an hourly wage of \$16.07 per hour.

As part of the Living Wage for All Campaign, United Methodist Women is joining faith and labor coalitions working to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. But that will not be enough to guarantee a living wage for families. In most states this rate will be implemented over several years and it is still below the living wage.

There are many other reasons that workers do not make a living wage *even* if the hourly minimum wage were adequate:

- **Wage theft:** employers may steal wages by not paying overtime, altering time slips, etc.
- **Scheduling:** employers may not give workers enough hours for a full week's pay.
- **Tipped workers** earn a lower minimum wage and rely on tips to make up the difference.
- **Domestic workers** do not fall under labor regulations. While they legally should earn minimum wage, this work is rarely monitored and often functions outside the formal economy.
- Most **farm workers** have the legal right to earn the minimum wage. However, there is little enforcement, in part because they are not guaranteed the right to organize in unions.
- When employers do not pay sick leave, family leave, holidays or **benefits**, workers must pay out of pocket. This cuts into already slim earnings.

A Racial Justice Issue – yesterday and today

President Franklin Roosevelt cut a deal with Southern segregationist lawmakers in order to pass the New Deal. The Social Security Act of 1935 excluded farmworkers and domestic workers from receiving unemployment insurance and social security retirement benefits. *Sixty-five percent of African Americans were excluded from these programs at the time.* The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 excluded domestic workers and tipped workers, mostly black, from the new minimum wage.



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Today, while farmworkers, domestic workers and tipped workers, now mostly immigrants of color, must officially be paid the federal minimum wage, in practice this is often not the case.ⁱ The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 excluded domestic workers and farm workers from the right to organize in unions. This prevents them from working together as a group for their rights.ⁱⁱ These workers of color, many of them women, continue to be the lowest paid and most exploited.

Legislative Entry Points

As United Methodist Women members seek legislative entry points in their state to advance the minimum wage, these might include:

- Legislation to raise the minimum wage.
- *One Fair Wage* ballot measures so that **tipped workers** make the same minimum wage.
- State **Domestic Workers'** Bill of Rights to establish legal rights for domestic workers.
- Support **Farm Workers'** organizing efforts to raise wages through growers' contracts and corporate supply chains.
- Protecting worker's right to organize, a right guaranteed in international law.
- Legislation mandating pay-stubs, to challenge wage theft.
- Increasing inspections to enforce wage and labor law to challenge violations
- Updating overtime laws to restore the 40-hour workweek. Increase the income threshold for mandatory overtime to \$47,476/year (which would still exclude domestic workers and farm workers).
- Legislation for paid sick and family leave (which would still not apply to domestic workers and farm workers).
- Advocating for women to be paid the same as men for equal work, and have the opportunity to move into higher paid labor sectors and positions.
- Local living wage ordinances.

To learn about legislative efforts in your state, see: unitedmethodistwomen.org/living-wage-map

For more information on how to get involved, contact: livingwage@unitedmethodistwomen.org

#LivingWage4All

ⁱ The Ever-Growing Gap. The Racial Wealth Divide Initiative and Institute for Policy Studies, ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Ever-Growing-Gap-CFED_IPS-Final-2.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://nfwm.org/education-center/farm-worker-issues/labor-laws/>