

## IMPORTANT VOTE IN SENATE ON MINIMUM WAGE

January 23, 2007

The Senate will vote to end debate on a stand alone increase to the minimum wage on **Wednesday, January 24**. Senate leadership has been persuaded to seek a vote on the House passed minimum wage bill, H.R. 2 **without small business tax cuts or other amendments**. This “cloture” vote is very important for our efforts to raise the wages of low paid workers.

**BACKGROUND:** The Minimum Wage ALERT of January 19 told you about the reported coupling of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 and the Small Business and Work Opportunity Act of 2007 (which includes tax breaks and other measures for small businesses) and about some of the likely amendments being proposed to the bill. However, weekend negotiations produced an agreement to vote on the House passed bill containing only the minimum wage provisions. If this vote fails they will proceed to consideration of tax breaks and other amendments.

These Senators will be very important to this vote:

Baucus-MT

Carper-DE

Coleman-MN

Collins-ME

Ensign-NV

Kohl-WI

Landrieu-LA

Lincoln-AR

Murkowski-AK

Ben Nelson-NE

Bill Nelson-FL

Pryor-AR

Smith-OR

Snowe-ME

Specter-PA

Stevens-AK

Voinovich-OH

Warner-VA

**USCCB Position:** Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Chairman of the USCCB Domestic Policy Committee, wrote to the Senate on January 18 urging them to support the bill. In his letter, he said: “Work has a special place in Catholic social thought. Work is more than just a job; it is a reflection of human dignity and a way to contribute to the common good. Most importantly, it is the ordinary way people meet their material needs and community obligations. In Catholic teaching, the principle of a just wage is integral to our understanding of human work. Wages must be adequate for workers to provide for themselves and their families in dignity. The United States bishops’ conference has supported the minimum wage since its inception as a just means to protect the human rights and dignity of workers.”

A minimum wage increase is long overdue. Families struggle when this meager wage leaves them about \$6,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. No one who works for a living should have to live in poverty. Other issues (e.g., replacing the 40-hour workweek with an 80 hour work period, freezing wages for tipped workers, or a line-item veto) could have significant impact and should be thoroughly evaluated in the full legislative process, not attached to a popular increase in the minimum wage. Congress could take up these issues independent of the minimum wage bill.

Call your **Senators especially those listed above** (202-224-3121, Capitol Switchboard) and urge them to support the cloture motion on the minimum wage.

Thank you for your hard work! Please keep the calls and emails going into their offices. Let them know how important this vote is!