

## Rebuild the American Dream by Making Work Pay

**5. Make Work Pay.** Americans have a right to fair minimum and living wages, to organize and collectively bargain, to enjoy equal opportunity and to earn equal pay for equal work. Corporate assaults on these rights bring down wages and benefits for all of us. They must be outlawed.

**Increase the Minimum Wage.** *Low-wage workers in the late 1960's were better off than low-wage workers today.*

- **We Used to Do Better:** If America's minimum wage had kept up with inflation, today's low-wage workers [would make](#) \$10.38 an hour, or over \$21,500 annually for full-time work. Instead they earn just \$7.25, or \$15,000 a year. [Bureau of Labor Statistics]
- **It's Not Just For the Lowest-Paid Workers:** Increasing the minimum wage spills over to [raise the paychecks](#) for the millions of Americans earning just above the minimum, too. [Economic Policy Institute (EPI)]
- **It's Good for the Economy:** Contrary to conservative propaganda, raising the minimum wage [does not result in job losses](#) or slow rehiring. In fact, increasing it now would give a much-needed, bottom-up [boost to our stalled economy](#) by putting more money in the hands of those would spend it to support their families. [National Employment Law Project, Chicago Federal Reserve]

**Protect the Right to Organize.** *Unions helped build the middle class in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and without them, there may not be one in the 21<sup>st</sup>.*

- **Forming a Union is an American Right. It's Up to Us to Defend:** Companies now routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire people who try to form unions—and current labor law is helpless to stop them. The penalties are so slight for breaking the law that corporations simply consider it the cost of doing business. The government found that companies violated the rights of almost [30,000 workers in 2007](#) alone (and those are just the documented cases). A quarter even illegally fire workers. [AFL-CIO]
- **Attacks on Organizing Have Eroded the American Dream for Most Workers:** Nearly 1 out of every 3 workers was in a union when the middle class was stronger in the 1960s; now it's less than 1 in 10. The decline in working-class families' living standards – and the [decline in the middle class'](#) share of our national take-home pay – [has been linked](#) to an increase in the punitive actions taken by employers whose workers attempt to organize. [EPI, Center for American Progress (CAP)]
- **More Unions Mean Better Work for Everyone:** If more of the 66 million American workers who want to join a union could join one tomorrow, their paychecks and benefits would increase – but so would millions of others'. The union "premium" [succeeds in lifting wages on non-union employees](#) in the same industries while not being a determining factor of a state's economic or job growth. [EPI]
- **Unions are the Lobbyists for Everyday Americans:** On issues from consumer protection to health, safety and civil rights, the labor movement fights against the corporate takeover of our state houses and Washington every single day. But they're [outspent and outgunned](#): in 30 years, the gap between corporate campaign contributions and worker donations through unions went from \$6 million to nearly \$220 million. And in 2010, corporations and trade associations spent \$2.8 *billion* lobbying compared to just \$47 *million* for organized labor. [CAP]