

Raise the Wage VT - Message Guide

One sentence message: By gradually raising the minimum wage in Vermont to \$15, almost one hundred thousand working Vermonters will be better able to care for and support their families, and their spending will create jobs in communities throughout our state.

One paragraph message: By gradually raising the minimum wage in Vermont to \$15 an hour, so that families can meet the basics, their spending will boost Main Street, create jobs and help Vermont communities to thrive. It's ridiculous that today even jobs like nursing assistants, paramedics and pre-school teachers in Vermont pay less than \$15. We should respect working people more than that. And increasing people's wages is both fair and smart. It is fair because every job should pay a living wage and it's smart because when people have more money to spend in their neighborhoods, it boosts our state's economy. Every working parent in Vermont should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future.

Five Key Messages on Raising Wages

- By gradually raising the minimum wage in Vermont to \$15 an hour so that families can meet the basics, their spending will boost Main Street, create jobs and help Vermont communities to thrive.
- It's ridiculous that even jobs like nursing assistants, paramedics and pre-school teachers in Vermont pay less than \$15 an hour. In fact, the minimum wage in Vermont – only \$10.50 in 2018 – is far below what Vermont State government calculates as the livable wage today.
- Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future. But, more than 43,000 Vermont children live in a household supported by someone being paid less than \$15 per hour, with most of those parents actually paid under \$12! When parents earn more, their children do better, with well-documented benefits to their children's health, educational outcomes and future earnings.
- Powerful corporations are using their influence to hold down wages and benefits so working people can't meet the basics to care for and support their families.

Messages for Specific Audiences

Minimum wage message for women: Gradually raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour will help women and families throughout Vermont meet the basics to care and support our families. More than half of Vermonters who will get a raise are women, which is why by raising the minimum wage, we'll take a major step toward lowering the imbalance between what men and women get paid for the same work.

Minimum wage message for young people: Gradually raising the minimum wage will help young people starting out in life, meet the basics and make it much easier to stay in Vermont. Too many young people are stuck at low-wage jobs, even after their teen years. In fact, nine-in-ten Vermonters who will earn more when the minimum wage is raised are 20 years and older. Gradually raising the minimum wage in Vermont to \$15 will give young people in Vermont a boost when they are just getting started, leading to better earnings that will boost our state's economy now and for years to come.

Message for small businesses: Vermont's local business owners share the same goals of all Vermonters: we want thriving communities that will keep Vermonters here in state and attract more families to move and stay here. But today the minimum wage in Vermont is well below what it takes to support even a single person, let alone a family. By gradually raising the minimum wage to a livable wage gradually, we'll keep more people in our state and put more money in the pockets of Vermonters to spend in our communities, boosting small businesses and helping our communities to thrive.

Minimum wage message for union members: There are good reasons that union members have always led the fight to increase the minimum wage. Working people understand that every job should pay enough for families to meet the basics. And that it's ridiculous that even jobs like nursing assistants, pre-school teachers and paramedics in Vermont pay low wages pay less than \$15. We should value working people more than that. Union members also understand that when we raise the wage floor, it increases our power to negotiate together for higher wages for the skilled, valuable work we do. The more money we put in the pockets of working people, the more our spending boosts Main Street, creates jobs and helps our communities thrive.

Questions and Answers with Some Key Facts on Raising the Minimum Wage

The following are examples of how you can use the messaging when you respond to common claims by opponents.

“Businesses, not government, should be setting wages - they know best what they can afford.”

- Powerful corporations are cutting our wages and benefits so people can't even meet the basics. Gradually increasing the minimum wage will boost incomes for almost one-hundred thousand Vermonters, boosting our economy and building stronger communities.

“Raising the minimum wage will cost jobs.”

- Numerous studies – based on real minimum wage increases – show that increases in the minimum wage will not cause employers to eliminate jobs. Instead, it will increase consumer demand, which will create more jobs. Working families in Vermont will have a little more money to spend and our local businesses will benefit from it. It's a win-win for everybody.
 - A major [new study](#) of all U.S. state and federal minimum wage increases between 1979 and 2016 found they boosted pay without costing jobs. Another [leading study](#) compared job growth in all neighboring U.S. counties with varying minimum wages – including Vermont's counties bordering New Hampshire where the minimum wage is much lower – and found no evidence that higher wages hurt jobs.
- The claim that if wages go up, employment goes down, is an intimidation tactic that powerful corporations use to bully working people, so that CEOs will get more and the rest of us will get less.

“Raising the minimum wage will hurt small business.”

- Vermont's local business owners share the same goals of all Vermonters: we want thriving communities that will keep Vermonters here in state and attract more families to move and stay here. Putting more money in the pockets of workers to spend in our communities boosts small businesses and helps our communities to thrive.

“Minimum wage workers are mostly teenagers.”

- Too many Vermont working people – including thousands of young parents – are paid wages so low they can't meet the basics. In fact, eight-in-ten of those who would earn more in Vermont with a \$15/hr minimum wage are 20 years and older, including the parents of 43,000 children. Higher wages will help young people raise their families in Vermont. Gradually raising the minimum wage to \$15 will give almost one-hundred thousand Vermont families a boost, in turn boosting the economy and building stronger communities.

“Raising the minimum wage will push some people over the ‘benefits cliff’.”

- Raising Vermont’s minimum wage will improve the incomes of 87,000 working Vermonters so they can better support themselves and their family. At the same time, the legislature has a clear obligation to be sure that the parents of 7,000 children keep the child care subsidies that allow those parents to work and provide the best possible future for their children.

A Few Facts About Gradually Raising the Minimum Wage to \$15 in Vermont

What the legislation will do: Vermont’s minimum wage will be just \$10.50 an hour – and that’s not until 2018. The Raise the Wage legislation will gradually raise the minimum wage for working people in Vermont to \$15 an hour between 2019 and 2022 and then increase it each year to keep up with inflation.

What is a livable wage in Vermont now? Vermont, under state law, calculates the livable wage in Vermont each year. [In 2016](#) it was \$13.03 an hour, and that’s for two adults with no children! For a single Vermonter, sharing a home, it was \$14.46 in a city and \$12.98 in a rural area of our State. If we were to raise the minimum wage where it should be – to a livable wage – we would hike it several dollars right now. The Raise Up Vermont legislation gives plenty of time to phase in a gradual increase to \$15 by 2022.

Who will get a raise*:

- *Working people* – 87,000 Vermonters
- *Women and men* – 55% will be women and 45% men
- *Adults* – Eight-in-ten (85%) will be older than 20 and four-in-ten (41%) older than 40.
- *Parents* – 17,000 parents of 43,000 children.
- *All of us:*
 - White – 90%
 - Black – 2%
 - Latino – 2%
 - Asian or other – 6%
- *Full and part-time workers*
 - Most (58%) work full time and another one-in-five (22%) work between 20 and 34 hours a week.
- *High school and college grads*
 - Seven-out-of-eight (86%) graduated from high-school
 - One-out-of-four (23%) who have at least an Associate degree.

* Data from: <http://www.epi.org/publication/15-by-2024-would-lift-wages-for-41-million/>