

LGBT Workers and the Minimum Wage

Raising the federal minimum wage is a critical civil rights issue and will make a significant difference in the lives of millions of low-wage workers and their families. Members of the LGBT community have disproportionately high rates of poverty, so increasing wages would be greatly beneficial both for LGBT people and for the entire nation's economic recovery. Today there are an estimated 5.4 million LGBT workers in the United States.¹ They are:

More likely to live in poverty

- Transgender people are nearly four times as likely to have a household income under \$10,000 per year as the population as a whole (15 percent vs. 4 percent).²
- 7.6 percent of lesbian couples, compared to 5.7 percent of married different-sex couples, are in poverty.³
- African American same-sex couples have poverty rates more than twice the rate of different-sex married African Americans.⁴
- 14.1 percent of lesbian couples and 7.7 percent of gay male couples receive food stamps, compared to 6.5 percent of different-sex married couples.⁵
- Single LGBT adults raising children are three times more likely to have incomes near the poverty line compared to single non-LGBT individuals raising children.⁶
- Married or partnered LGBT individuals raising children are twice as likely to have household incomes near the poverty line compared to married or partnered non-LGBT parents.⁷

More likely to earn less

- Studies conducted over the past decade show that gay and bisexual men experience a wage penalty and earn between 10 percent and 32 percent less than heterosexual men, even when controlling for important factors like education, occupation, and region of the country.⁸
- Household income for households headed by lesbian couples is considerably lower than it is for both opposite-sex households and households headed by gay men. Two women, even if they individually earn more than comparable heterosexual women, may still have a combined household income that is lower than that of a married opposite-sex couple because both earners' wages are affected by the gender wage gap. This "double-gap" multiplier means less money for the entire family every year and fewer resources to save for retirement.⁹

The Minimum Wage Fairness Act¹⁰ would:

- raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 by 2016, in three increments of 95 cents each;
- adjust the minimum wage each following year to keep pace with the rising cost of living;
- and raise the minimum wage for tipped workers, which has been frozen at a meager \$2.13 per hour for more than 20 years.



"We demand that there be an increase in the national minimum wage so that men may live in dignity."

– Bayard Rustin
1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

A \$10.10 minimum wage would mean higher earnings for 17 million workers¹¹ with little to no effect on the employment rate,¹² and could lift nearly five million Americans out of poverty.¹³

The Leadership Conference Education Fund builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. The Education Fund's campaigns empower and mobilize advocates around the country to push for progressive change in the United States.

The National Center for Transgender Equality is a national social justice organization devoted to ending discrimination and violence against transgender people through education and advocacy on national issues of importance to transgender people. By empowering transgender people and our allies to educate and influence policymakers and others, NCTE facilitates a strong and clear voice for transgender equality in our nation's capital and around the country.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund builds the grassroots political power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The Task Force Action Fund does this through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation, and works to pass pro-LGBT legislation and other progressive initiatives.

¹ <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/a-broken-bargain-full-report.pdf>.

² http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf.

³ <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/a-broken-bargain-full-report.pdf>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c113:S.1737:>

¹¹ http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4075#_ftn10.

¹² <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>.

¹³ https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15038936/Dube_MinimumWagesFamilyIncomes.pdf.