



INTERFAITH CALL FOR MORAL ACTION ON THE ECONOMY

In Honor of the Legacy of
The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Who Was Assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968
Standing in Solidarity with Striking Low-Wage Workers

As people of faith, we are deeply concerned about widening economic inequality in America and its impact on low-wage workers and their families.

We believe that it is an affront to human dignity when workers are deprived of fully enjoying the fruits of their labor and must struggle to simply feed, clothe and shelter themselves and their children. To add insult to injury, many of these low-wage workers are falling into deeper poverty and despair because of predatory practices such as wage theft and payday lending that rob them of their rightful compensation and keep them trapped in a cycle of debt.

The plight of the working poor in America today is especially troubling because our society is enjoying great abundance, but only a select few are able to share in this bounty. The suffering of low-wage workers and the growing economic inequality are not only political and economic issues, but also moral concerns that we are compelled by our faith traditions to address.

That's why faith leaders across the nation stand in solidarity with low-wage workers, the majority of whom are people of color and women, who are striking to win "\$15 and a Union." These workers, are marching in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr., who dedicated his life to the struggle for racial and economic equality.

Indeed, Dr. King reminded us that the civil rights and labor movements share a common mission. In 1965, he stated that *"the labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old age pensions, government relief for the destitute, and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life."*

Today, we call on all those who are seeking the Presidency of the United States to honor the legacy of Dr. King and stand in solidarity with all people who are seeking to achieve racial and economic justice in our society.

Previous presidents have set the precedent. In 1965, President Johnson used his executive powers over federal contracting to open job opportunities to people of color and women. More recently, President Obama used the power of the pen to make sure these jobs were *good jobs* by issuing executive orders to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, curtail wage theft, and extend paid leave on federal contracts.

However, the US Government continues to be America's leading low-wage job creator. This is unjust and immoral.

Given the scale of human suffering caused by taxpayer supported low-wage jobs, we urge all of the 2016 Presidential candidates to build on President Obama's executive orders and pledge to do even more to create good jobs for America's workers.

We therefore call on the candidates to heed our call to take "Moral Action on the Economy" by pledging to issue an executive order to make sure taxpayer dollars reward "model employers" that pay a living wage of at least \$15 an hour, provide decent benefits and allow workers to organize without retaliation. We also urge all the candidates to champion passage of legislation in Congress to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour and strengthen the rights of workers to organize. In addition, we call on all those running for President to commit to taking action to end abusive economic practices such as wage theft and predatory payday lending practices.

All of our faith traditions advocate for justice, dignity, and respect for all workers. We believe that every human being is created in the image of the divine and should be empowered to fulfill their potential.

By helping our nation's most vulnerable workers achieve justice at work, the next President can lift millions out of poverty and secure a brighter future for all Americans. We stand ready to help the next President lead the way towards creating a more fair and equitable society.

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