

## MN minimum wage & the kids of the working poor

Written by Dan Heyman, Minnesota News Connection  
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### WHO'S HELPED BY RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE?



Supporters of raising Minnesota's minimum wage say the most important group that action would help may be the children of the working poor.

Many think the only people earning minimum wage are teenagers at their first job. In reality, however, most are age 20 or older and earn a big part of their families' income.

A lot are folks such as Mike Henry of Duluth, who is trying to support a fiancée and two children with temporary work. Henry said that's impossible on just the minimum wage.

"It's not enough," he said. "The only way to survive is to get food stamps. Your wages will cover your living situation, but by the time you get done paying bills you don't have money for food."

According to the Minnesota Budget Project, more than 350,000 folks in the state would get a boost if the minimum wage were raised to \$9.50. That would increase a typical low-wage worker's annual income by \$1,300, and child advocates say that would be enough to improve a child's academic performance. Nan Madden, director of the budget project, said it could make a difference for more than 100,000 children in the state.

"The minimum wage is a crucial issue for many Minnesota children," she said. "There is an estimated 137,000 Minnesota kids whose parents are low-wage workers and would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage."

Critics of raising the minimum wage say it results in more unemployment, but Madden said economic studies have found that isn't the case. If the federal minimum had kept pace with what it was worth in 1968, Madden said, it would be nearly \$11 now.

Henry said it's only fair for the minimum to be tied to inflation.

"I'm 34," he said. "When I was 16 and 15, back when I was coming up, \$7.50 was OK. Wages should go up with the price of milk. ... Why are jobs so far behind?"

As of now, the federal minimum of \$7.25 an hour applies to most employees in Minnesota.

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Observers say there's a good chance the state Legislature will raise the minimum wage for the state during its next session.