



**CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE
OF KENTUCKY**

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.

1042 Burlington Lane • Frankfort, KY 40601 • (502) 875-4345 • FAX: (502) 875-2841 • www.ccky.org

HB 305 - Increasing the minimum wage in KY

KY has a moral opportunity to raise the minimum wage

HB 305 increases the state minimum wage from \$5.15 (\$10,712. per year) to \$7.00 an hour in June 2007;

provides an annual cost of living increase, and eliminates the \$2.13 paid to those receiving tips.

HB 305 is expected to be voted on in the House Labor and Industry Committee on Thursday, February 15, 2007.

Sponsor and co-sponsors: J. Gray, R. Adkins, L. Clark, H. Collins, L. Combs, J. Crenshaw, T. Firkins, K. Hall, C. Hoffman, D. Horlander, D. Keene, C. Miller, T. Riner, D. Sims, D. Watkins, R. Wilkey, B. Yonts

Reasons for this legislation. Catholic Social justice doctrine honors work for a just wage as a critical means to achieve human dignity. Pope Pius XI said in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) "the worker must be paid a wage sufficient to support him and his family.... But if this cannot always be done under existing circumstances, social justice demands that changes be introduced as soon as possible whereby such a wage will be assured to every adult workingman.", n. 71. A just wage is a fundamental way we advance human dignity. Catholic social doctrine teaches that workers should receive a just wage, defined as the amount needed to meet the basic needs of a family.

Pope Leo XIII taught, "The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government." *Rerum Novaum* nn. 37, 45.

Pope John XXIII reaffirmed in *Mater Et Magistra* (1961) that the "remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that

SUPPORT HB 305

Co-sponsor and VOTE YES for **HB 305**. Vote **NO** on amendments **NOT** approved by the sponsor. This bill helps low income workers.

workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner." (n. 71).

Pope John Paul II identified a just wage as a "key," and

"concrete means of *verifying the justice* of the whole socioeconomic system and, in any case, of checking that it is functioning justly." *Laborem exercens* (1981), n. 19.

- The minimum wage has not been increased since 1997.
- With the increase to \$7.00, minimum-wage workers will earn an additional \$3,848 a year which will make a big difference to someone who only earns around \$10,712 a year.
- 30 states plus the District of Columbia have a minimum wage higher than the federal level of \$5.15.

There is overwhelming public support for a minimum wage increase. In a November 2005 Gallup Poll, 83% of Americans favored increasing the minimum wage, while only 14% opposed it. *The Gallup Poll Briefing* (March 2006 pp. 8-9). Contrary to what many believe, the broad public support for increasing the minimum wage is bipartisan. Republicans (74%), Independents (80%), and Democrats (93%) overwhelmingly favor an increase in the minimum wage. 79% of those making more than \$75,000 favor an increase. *The Gallup Poll Briefing* (March 2006 p. 8)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Chapter Two

"You shall Love your Neighbor as Yourself"

ARTICLE 7: THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT, "You shall not steal." 2434 A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice.²²¹ In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good." Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.