



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

January 5, 2007

Sent Via Fax

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing to express our strong support for the passage of legislation during the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress to increase the minimum wage by \$2.10 over two years. We commend your leadership on addressing this important issue so early in the new Congress.

The LCAO is a coalition of national non-profit organizations concerned with the well being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in the policy making process. Our 54 members engage in resource sharing and joint advocacy on a range of issues affecting older persons. All told, LCAO members touch more than 134 million Americans through service provision and advocacy.

Unfortunately, the real value of the minimum wage has eroded more than 20% since the last wage increase in 1997. At the current rate, an individual who works full-time for a year would earn a mere \$10,700—an amount that is below the poverty level for a family and insufficient to keep pace with rising prices in the economy.

Thousands of senior citizens work in minimum-wage retail and service jobs to supplement their Social Security benefits. When you consider that greater life expectancy may require them to stretch their financial resources into their 80s and 90s – years that may be plagued by acute or long-term illness and rising health care costs – it's clear that these older workers need a raise.

Also, many people we love the most are cared for by workers who are paid the least. Increasing the minimum wage will not only help them achieve a better standard of living, but also address a growing shortage of long-term care workers. Many nurse aides and home care workers make minimum wage and lack access to affordable health insurance. Turnover is a major problem with negative implications for the quality of care in institutional and home- and community-based care. Raising the minimum wage will improve the conditions of direct care workers and will benefit consumers by stabilizing the workforce.

Increasing the minimum wage will require additional funding for programs, including Medicaid, that provide services for senior citizens in order to maintain the same number of service hours. Nevertheless, we find it unacceptable that these vital workers are unable to provide for themselves and their families, despite their honest work and years in the workforce.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and we look forward to working with you to enact changes that will improve the lives of millions of senior citizens and the people that care for them.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Retiree Program
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement & Retirees
American Postal Workers Union Retirees
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores/National Association for Hispanic Elderly
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities
B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Families USA
Gray Panthers
International Union, United Auto Workers
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council On Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Service Employees International Union