



Wider Opportunities for Women

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Women's Group Lauds Wage Bill

Statement of Joan A. Kuriansky, Executive Director, Wider Opportunities for Women

Washington, Jan. 9, 2007 – Wider Opportunities for Women, one of the nation's oldest women's employment rights organizations, fully supports the Democrats' proposal to raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour.

Women are disproportionately represented among minimum wage workers. Women are more likely to be in those jobs in the retail and clerical sectors that traditionally pay minimum wages. Women's wage progression in the low skilled work force tends to mirror the status of minimum wage.

In a recent study of living costs of a mother and her two children in ten U.S. communities, WOW found that working full time at a minimum wage job covered only 29 to 38 percent of WOW's Self-Sufficiency Standard, calculated to show how much families of different configurations to make ends meet given local housing, child care, transportation and other costs. (See the report, "Coming Up Short," http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issuebriefs_ib133.)

In 2006, the self-sufficiency wage calculated by WOW for a parent and two young children in selected locations ranged from a low of \$9.32 an hour in Warren County, NC, to a high of \$36.91 in New York County (southern Manhattan).

Today, a mother and her two children must work three minimum wage jobs to sustain herself and her family. The proposed increase will help reduce that burden but will still require that single moms work at least one and a half such jobs after the wage bill is fully phased in. After nine years without a raise in the minimum wage, it's about time. W hopes the bill can be adopted quickly without any amendments.

Because the Earned Income Tax Credit rises with the earnings of very low wage workers, this small hourly increase will have a greater impact on a family's annual, after-tax income than at would at first appear.

A higher minimum wage will raise the base from which girls and women begin to build a wage history. It will also tend to boost the wages of workers somewhat higher up a career ladder. WOW works to create career paths in high-demand occupations that can lead to family economic security.

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Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) works nationally and in its home community of Washington, DC to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and girls. For more than 40 years, WOW has helped women learn to earn, with programs emphasizing literacy, technical and nontraditional skills, the welfare-to-work transition and career development. Since 1964, WOW has trained more than 10,000 women for well paid work. WOW leads the National Family Economic Self Sufficiency Project in 36 states, reaching over 2,000 organizations.