

Small Business Owners: Raising Wages Makes Sense

By Freddie Allen
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – More than 60 percent of small business owners with employees favor increasing the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 in three stages, according to a new survey.

The poll, sponsored by the American Sustainable Business Council, an advocacy group that represents more than 200,000 businesses and Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, described on the group's website as "a national network of business owners and executives who believe a fair minimum wage makes good business sense."

The results from the poll conducted in June, showed that nearly 60 percent of small business owners say that raising the minimum wage would increase consumer purchasing power.

Blacks disproportionately work in low-wage jobs, accounting for 11 percent of the total labor force, but more than 14 percent of low-wage workers. Roughly 57 percent of low-wage workers are White.

More than half of those surveyed also agreed that "that with a higher minimum wage, businesses would benefit from lower employee turnover and increased productivity and customer satisfaction."

Six percent of the business owners in the survey were Black and roughly 80 percent were White. Ninety-nine percent of all African American businesses don't have any employees.

Sherry Stewart Deutschmann, founder and CEO of LetterLogic in Nashville, Tenn., said that because her employees well above the minimum wage, they have more money to spend with other businesses.



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Supporters of an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour encircle Seattle City Hall on Wednesday April 23, the day before Mayor Murray's Advisory group made up of business leaders, labor and non-profits was scheduled to release a recommendation. Seattle became the first city in the nation to pass a minimum wage ordinance.

contrast, less than 60 percent of small business owners in the South said they were in favor of an increase.

For proponents of a higher federal minimum wage, the poll results undercut the argument that raising the minimum wage would hurt small businesses.

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"First, slightly more than 47 percent of people earning the minimum wage or less are Millennials between the ages of 20 and 34," said the report. "More than 39 percent of people earning the minimum wage are people of color."

The report also noted that today the minimum wage at \$7.25 is worth less now than it was 50 years ago when more than 250,000 Americans marched on Washington for jobs and freedom in 1963.

"Unless there are significant policy changes, the rising population of young

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people of color will mature in a society that is not structured for their success," said the report. "It is critically important that we address these issues now – before the inequality that disproportionately affects communities of color compromises our nation's economic future."

A recent report by the Center for American Progress, a progressive, Washington, D.C.-based think tank, found that the stagnant federal minimum wage presents barriers to economic mobility for two key demographics.

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"With our starting wage of \$12 my employees have more money to spend at other businesses. We don't count on other businesses and taxpayers to subsidize our profits by underwriting food stamps and other safety net assistance for our employees," said Deutschmann. "Why should I be subsidizing the profits of companies that pay wages their employees can't live on? A minimum wage raise is overdue."

The strongest support for raising the minimum wage came from respondents in the Northeast, where 67 percent of small business owners favored a higher wage. By

the federal minimum wage are teenagers living at home and supported by their parents.

Low-wage workers are more educated than they were four decades ago (about 30 percent have some college experience) and older (less than 15 percent are teenagers).

Earlier this year, the AFL-CIO reported that, "More than 2.2 million single moms would benefit from raising the minimum wage. One out of four of the workers who would benefit—and 31% of the women workers who would benefit—are parents with children."

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