

An open letter to President Obama -

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20006

May 21, 2010

Dear President Obama:

On March 2nd, 2010 the *New York Times* basically quoted you as saying that ..."everyone able to work, should have a job that pays a living wage." Congratulations. As far as we can tell, you are the first "sitting" President to call for living wage jobs. We define living wage jobs as ones that afford basic food, clothing and shelter (including utilities) wherever that work is done throughout the United States.

However, it is not enough to simply pick a number out of the air such as \$10.00 per hour and then index it to the cost of living. This will only help the band of workers in the middle. It will be insufficient to help the upper band of workers in our costly urban centers exit poverty or even homelessness. At the same time, it will only hurt small "mom and pop" businesses at the lower band in rural America where wages would be raised beyond the needs of the worker. On the other hand, by implementing our formula that indexes the wage to the local cost of housing (the number one most expensive item in the budget of every American be they owner or renter) we ensure the precise amount necessary to achieve economic stability. This approach ensures that all minimum workers will reach the economic threshold of the poverty line. This will end economic homelessness for at least 1,000,000 minimum wage workers and prevent economic homelessness for all other minimum wage workers.

Also, it is important to recognize that to embrace our current approach of wage increases that takes some of our core workers only part of the distance to the goal of escaping poverty, simply continues to leave the poorest of our American workers economically enslaved. If we only go half the distance to the goal line every time we advance, how long will it take us to reach that goal line?

Finally, it has been said, that to engage a fight half-heatedly takes no less political capital than it takes to engage the battle full hearted and makes no sense when only one approach is morally justifiable and economically sound for all.

Thank you.

In Unity There Is Strength,

Richard R. Troxell
National Chairman
Livable Incomes Coordinator
National Coalition for the Homeless