



WISCONSIN FAITH VOICES FOR JUSTICE AND THE INTERFAITH COALITION ON WORKER JUSTICE MINIMUM WAGE CHALLENGE

As people of faith, we honor the dignity of work and the ability it should bring to provide your family with the essentials – food, housing, clothing, medical care, transportation, and those things which bring joy to your life. Unfortunately, for hundreds of thousands of hard-working Wisconsinites making minimum wage, too many of these essentials are out of reach. The minimum wage in Wisconsin currently matches the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hr. At this rate of pay, a minimum wage worker’s weekly income is \$290. Subtracting average taxes and housing costs, the average worker has \$77 available each week to spend on all the rest of her expenses (55% of minimum wage workers nationally are women).

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and the Interfaith Coalition on Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin challenges clergy, legislators, journalists, and individuals to take the Minimum Wage Challenge to gain insights into the daily struggles minimum-wage workers face just trying to make ends meet. For the week of October 5-11, see if you can live on \$11 a day. What would this mean for your daily living? Most low-income workers do not have credit cards or checking accounts, so put away your credit cards and checkbooks. Gas and auto insurance are probably out of reach, so public transportation is the only way to go! Your morning latte is an unaffordable luxury. What else would change in your week’s routine?

You can take the Challenge in one of two ways: Take the Challenge in real time and spend no more than \$11 every day for the whole week. Keep track of what you spend money on, and what choices you had to make about what to spend your \$11 on, and what you had to forgo.



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What luxuries did you do without and what necessities? Or, take the Challenge virtually – every day record every time you spend money, what did you spend it on, did you pay cash, write a check, use your credit card? Include any automatic payments you make in a week. Keep a running total each day (you can use our virtual ‘checkbook’ to help you) and note when you have used up your \$11 allotment. How far into the day do you get each day before you’ve exceeded your budget?

Whether you take the Challenge in real time or virtually, let us know how it’s going for you. Post something about your experience each day to WFVJ’s Facebook Minimum Wage Discussion page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1441306156156072/>), and/or tweet to @Wifaithvoices using #raisethewage. Pay particular attention to answering the question: “how would my day have been different if I had only \$11 to spend?”

For some of us, living on minimum wage is not an exercise, it is a reality. We want to hear from you about your lived experience. Please share on the blog as far as you are comfortable, how would your day have been different if you made a living wage?

Of course taking the Challenge for a week cannot truly duplicate the experience of minimum wage workers who subsist on this income all the time. What it can do, however, is to help us gain some insights, spark conversation, and hopefully impel us to take action to let our legislators know we want them to raise Wisconsin’s minimum wage to a true living wage.

For more information, and to pledge to take the Minimum Wage Challenge, email Rabbi Bonnie Margulis at rabbibonnie@charter.net.

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