

Grover Norquist  
722 12th ST NW, Suite 400  
Washington DC 20005

November 14, 2013

Dear Mr. Norquist,

Despite our disagreements, we have been able to come together behind popular, reasonable policies in the past, such as encouraging openness in government contracts and rolling back corporate welfare and the Patriot Act. I am writing now to draw your attention to another policy that could use your support and that of others who care about taxpayer protection if not worker livelihoods: raising the federal minimum wage to at least what it was 45 years ago, inflation adjusted.

If the 1968 peak federal minimum wage grew with inflation, it would be \$10.77 today. If it grew with worker productivity, it would be \$18.67 today. But where does the federal minimum wage stand 45 years later? A miserly \$7.25 per hour. As a result, 30 million Americans are making less today, adjusted for inflation, than they did 45 years ago in 1968!

Such an erosion of the minimum wage does not just hurt low-wage workers: it hurts taxpayers, too. When corporations do not pay a living wage, low-wage workers become more reliant on public programs to get by and taxpayers end up footing the bill for the unconscionably low wages paid by the large, profitable corporations who employ many of the low-income workers in America.

Low wages at the ten largest fast food chains cost taxpayers \$3.8 billion per year, as 52% of families of front-line fast food workers rely on government assistance. Why should taxpayers shell out \$1.2 billion a year to help McDonald's pay its workers while the fast-food giant rakes in \$5.5 billion in profit? Walmart is even worse: according to a House Committee on Education and the Workforce study, taxpayers are paying about \$1 million in supplemental benefits per Walmart superstore per year. If taxpayers are footing a bill of \$1 million because of the low wages at one 300-employee superstore, think of how much Walmart is costing taxpayers each year, in total, at Walmart's 4,135 stores in the U.S.: should taxpayers allow this while Walmart posts \$17 billion profits and has enough excess funds to buy back \$90 billion in its stock over the past five years?

If you want to lower food stamp and Medicaid outlays, the quickest way to do so would be to raise the federal minimum wage. You would have the backing of 80% of Americans, 69% of Republicans, and writers from the *National Review* and *The American Conservative* magazines.

Corporate profiteers would love government entitlement outlays to increase and the minimum wage to decrease, thinking: *why pay workers to work for me when the government can pay them instead?* This common sense plays out in reality: McDonald's' "McResource" help line advises workers who cannot make ends meet from their wages to sign up for government food stamps and home heating assistance. Walmart too has provided advice to workers about getting on public assistance, while its CEO Mike Duke has his crony Board of Directors approve his getting \$11,000 an hour plus benefits.

Taxpayers need protection from this corruption of capitalism. I hope you can stand up for taxpayers by supporting a raise in the federal minimum wage to at least \$10.77, a level that catches up to the minimum wage's 1968 inflation-adjusted value, benefits 30 million Americans, and saves taxpayers billions of dollars.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph Nader". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" and last name "Nader" clearly distinguishable.

Ralph Nader

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