

Election 2016: Senate Races May Turn on Minimum Wage & Overtime

By Mitchell Hirsch

The 2016 elections offer a historic opportunity for working people to take decisive action at the ballot box to boost wages and working families' incomes. Years of stagnant and declining real wages, especially for low-wage workers, and widening income inequality between the very wealthiest and everyone else are central concerns for voters this year.

Nowhere is this more starkly the case than in this year's elections for United States Senate.

The federal minimum wage has been stuck at a poverty-level \$7.25 per hour since 2009. In 2014, Senate Republicans voted to block a bill that would have raised the minimum wage to \$10.10 over three years. House Republicans voted unanimously a year earlier to do the same. Since January 2015, Republican leaders in both houses of Congress have refused to allow consideration of *any* legislation increasing the federal minimum wage—not to \$15, not to \$12, not to any wage higher than the disgracefully low \$7.25.

This year, Republicans have clearly signaled that they intend to do nothing whatsoever about raising the federal minimum wage. The [Republican 2016 platform](#) attempts to dismiss the issue with a single sentence, [stunning in its hypocrisy](#): "Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level." In reality, in state after state, Republicans have blocked state minimum wage increases wherever and whenever they've been able to, and have stripped cities and counties of the power to enact higher local minimum wages.

In the 24 states with Republican-held Senate seats up for election in 2016, 27 million workers are paid less than \$15 an hour and are being denied a minimum wage increase.

Even as millions of workers begin to benefit from higher wages in the states and cities that are enacting higher minimum wages, tens of millions of others are being left behind. Seventeen million workers have won wage increases since late 2012, when the Fight for \$15 movement launched, including [10 million who are on track to earn \\$15 an hour](#) thanks to \$15 minimum wage plans enacted in California, New York, and a growing number of cities. But as significant as this progress has been, these workers comprise just one-fifth of the 58.3 million workers in the United States who are paid less than \$15 per hour—a potentially seismic voting bloc representing [more than 43 percent of the nation's workforce](#).

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[Twenty-one states](#) remain stuck at the \$7.25 federal minimum wage, and another 18 states have minimum wages that are [less than \\$9 per hour](#).

This year, of the 34 Senate seats up for election, 24 are held by Republicans, including 22 Republican incumbents who are seeking reelection. *Every one of those Republican incumbents who was present and voting in 2014 voted against raising the federal minimum wage from its poverty-level of \$7.25.*¹

By continually blocking federal minimum wage increases, Republicans in Congress are denying raises to tens of millions of underpaid workers. Keeping minimum wages at poverty levels, at which workers [cannot possibly afford the essentials for their families](#) or hope to build a future, also keeps wages depressed for workers more broadly. Low minimum wages, like the \$7.25 federal minimum wage and the only slightly higher minimum wages in most other states, act as a downward force to suppress both current wages and future wage growth for tens of millions of working people across the country.

Every Republican incumbent who was present and voting in 2014 voted against raising the federal minimum wage.

As a result, in the 24 states with Republican-held Senate seats up in 2016, 27 million workers today paid less than \$15 an hour are being denied a minimum wage increase.

Higher minimum wages have been shown to create ripple effects, [helping leverage wage gains](#) for workers making more than the minimum wage. Conversely, low minimum wages and their eroding real value depress wages more broadly, [increasing income inequality](#) and slowing the growth of the economy. Just as fiscal austerity acts as a drag on economic growth, so too does suppressed wage growth.

- Of the 22 incumbent Republican senators seeking reelection in 2016, every one present and voting voted to block a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 in 2014.²
- In the 24 states where Republicans are hoping to retain Senate seats in 2016, more than 27 million workers are paid less than \$15 per hour, including nearly 20 million who are paid less than \$12 per hour.³
- Of the 58.3 million workers in the U.S. paid less than \$15 per hour, nearly half (47 percent) live in states with Republican-held seats up for election this year alone. More than 46 percent (19.5 million) of the nation's 41.7 million workers making less than \$12 per hour live in those 24 states.
- Of the 24 states with Republican-held Senate seats up in 2016, 16 of them are among the [21 states](#) stuck at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25.
- In the 16 states with Republican-held Senate seats up in 2016 where the minimum wage is stuck at the \$7.25 federal minimum wage, one in three workers (11 million)

¹ Senate Roll Call Vote 117, April 30, 2014, 113th Congress. Source: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=2&vote=00117#position Senator James Lankford (R-OK) was not in office; Senator John Boozman (R-AR) did not vote.

² Ibid.

³ These data and others on numbers of workers paid less than \$12 per hour and less than \$15 per hour, as well as numbers of salaried workers benefiting from the new overtime rule are calculations based on data contained in *Few Rewards – An Agenda to Give America's Working Poor a Raise* (June 2016), Oxfam America and Economic Policy Institute. See: <https://policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org/work/poverty-in-the-us/low-wage-map/>.

are paid less than \$12 per hour; nearly half (47 percent, or 15.7 million) are paid less than \$15 per hour.

- Another seven Republican seats up in this election are in states with only slightly higher minimum wages, ranging from \$7.65 in Missouri to \$8.55 in South Dakota.
- With the exception of Illinois, higher minimum wages in the Republican Senate states were all achieved through voter ballot initiatives rather than legislative action, since Republican-controlled state legislatures have blocked virtually all action to raise the minimum wage.
- Of the 14 Senate races considered most competitive this year, 12 are for Republican-held seats, with incumbents seeking reelection in 11 of them. Two are for Democratic-held seats.

Even as other states and dozens of cities have raised their minimum wages to between \$10 and \$15 an hour, and four states will put ballot measures for at least \$12 statewide minimum wages before voters in November, the millions of low-wage workers in the states with Republican-held Senate seats up for election this year are falling further and further behind as there is no chance that their state legislators will take up any effort to raise the minimum wage.

Without higher minimum wages, and especially a significantly higher federal minimum wage, workers in the United States will continue to see their pay stagnate and their families' real incomes erode. But with their votes in 2016, especially in key Senate races and for the presidency, workers can make this election a turning point in the fight to raise wages.

In Fight for Higher Wages, Workers Can Win at the Ballot Box, Polls Show

[Recent polls](#) of likely voters in seven crucial battleground states show overwhelming support for [raising the federal minimum wage](#) and for the Obama administration's [expansion of overtime pay coverage](#) for salaried workers earning less than \$47,476 per year. Roughly 70 percent of voters across those states support raising the federal minimum wage; overall, more than 60 percent favor raising it to \$15 over several years. Nearly 80 percent support the rule raising the salary threshold to provide overtime pay coverage for 12.5 million more salaried workers.

Those polls, conducted by Public Policy Polling for the National Employment Law Project Action Fund, focus on seven of the swing states where incumbent Republican senators are in competitive reelection races. They show that if voters are clear where candidates stand on workers' pay issues, Republican incumbents who oppose higher pay for workers will see their support diminished and may well lose their seats.

In Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and New Hampshire, Democratic challengers strengthened their leads over incumbent Republican senators when voters were made aware of the senators' opposition to raising the minimum wage.

And in Arizona, Missouri, and North Carolina, Democratic Senate challengers pulled ahead of incumbent Republicans, flipping those contests on their heads when voters learned of the senators' track records opposing federal minimum wage increases.

Democratic challengers in several states strengthened their leads over incumbent Republican senators when voters were made aware of the senators' opposition to raising the minimum wage.

With 22 Republican Senate incumbents seeking reelection this year, and roughly half of them facing competitive races, Republican control of the Senate may very well be in jeopardy. If Democratic challengers succeed in drawing sharp distinctions on the minimum wage and workers' pay issues, there is potential for a historic swing of Senate seats from Republicans to Democrats on a scale not seen in decades.

Republicans in Congress have opposed virtually all of the core progressive policies that would improve the incomes and the lives of America's workers and their families: raising the minimum wage; expanding overtime pay to cover more salaried workers; mandating earned sick time and paid family leave; ensuring fair scheduling; and enabling more workers to organize, join unions, and collectively bargain with their employers. The cornerstone of all of these policies is significantly raising the federal minimum wage, which would help boost pay more broadly and build momentum for paid leave, sick time, and other legislation.

For millions of underpaid workers, low wages are not primarily the result of complex, mysterious, or even unknowable *economic* forces. Instead, they are the result of policies imposed by readily knowable *political* forces—specifically, federal and state Republican lawmakers and their business-affiliated donors.

Backed by a multitude of powerful lobbying groups, Republicans in Congress and state legislatures act to keep minimum wages as low as they possibly can. And they continue to do so despite the largest of those [lobbying groups' own internal polls showing fully 80 percent](#) of business owners and executives support raising the minimum wage.

While keeping the federal minimum wage low, Senate and House Republicans on the campaign trail will pay lip service to “state and local control”—even as their Republican colleagues in state legislatures block virtually every attempt to raise the wage floor legislatively where they hold statehouse majorities.

Republicans in Congress pay lip service to “state and local control”—even as their state-level colleagues block virtually every legislative attempt to raise the wage floor.

In addition, Republicans have also acted to prohibit local minimum wage hikes, most recently in Missouri, Alabama, and Idaho. Twenty states have preempted local minimum wages, including 15 of the 21 states stuck at the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Of those, 12 are states with Republican-held Senate seats that are up in 2016 (AL, GA, IN, ID, KS, LA, NC, OK, PA, SC, UT, WI).

Nothing less than a substantial increase in the federal minimum wage, with annual cost-of-living adjustments, will keep tens of millions of America's workers from being left behind, caught in the vortex of downward wage pressure caused by a far-too-low and constantly eroding federal minimum wage.

Senate Republicans Seek to Deny Overtime Pay for 12 Million Workers

This year, the Obama administration finalized a new rule expanding overtime pay coverage to an additional 12.5 million salaried workers by raising the salary threshold to \$47,476 from the outdated level of \$23,660 set in 2004. Under the new rule, which is slated to take effect on December 1, 2016, salaried workers making less than \$913 per week (\$47,476 per year) will be entitled to time-and-a-half pay for any hours worked in excess of 40 hours a week. With recent surveys indicating the average full-time worker's week averages about 47

hours, the resulting benefit in either added pay or fewer hours worked—or both—could be substantial. And many employers will hire more workers instead of paying higher overtime costs, [creating tens of thousands of additional jobs](#).

Yet, as with raising the federal minimum wage, Republicans in Congress and their allies in the states and the business community are trying to thwart the overtime expansion.

- 44 Republican senators are sponsors of a resolution designed to block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- 15 of the 22 incumbent Republican senators seeking reelection in 2016 are cosponsors, including Senators John McCain of Arizona, Marco Rubio of Florida, and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin.
- In the 24 states with Republican-held Senate seats up in the 2016 election, a combined 5.8 million workers will benefit from the overtime expansion.
- Republican officials from 21 states have [filed suit to block implementation of the administration's new overtime rule](#); 14 of those states have Republican-held seats up in 2016.
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups have [filed a separate lawsuit](#) attempting to block the overtime rule.

Congressional Republicans are trying to thwart expanded overtime pay coverage.

Low Wages Drive Up Public Costs

Working families with members who are paid low wages are forced to try to bridge the gap between their incomes and their needs by turning to public benefits such as food assistance (SNAP “food stamps”), housing, childcare, or other assistance. These much-needed public benefits are a critical part of our too-weak social safety net. But when employers pay low wages, they increase the number of families who must rely on those benefits, effectively transferring the costs of supporting their workforce to the taxpayers.

- Researchers at the University of California - Berkeley Labor Center [estimate](#) that the combined federal and state costs of needed aid to low-wage working families is more than **\$152 billion** annually.⁴
- In the 21 states stuck at the \$7.25 federal minimum wage, the total public cost of this aid is more than **\$61 billion** per year—40 percent of the national total.
- Those costs amount to \$66 billion a year in the 24 states with Republican-held Senate seats up for election in 2016—43 percent of the national total.
- Nine potential swing states with incumbent Republican senators seeking reelection this year account for more than **\$44 billion** of those annual public costs. (FL-Rubio \$8.8 billion; IL-Kirk \$6.1 billion; GA-Isakson \$5.5 billion; OH-Portman \$5.2 billion; PA-Toomey \$5 billion; NC-Burr \$4.8 billion; AZ-McCain \$4.4 billion; MO-Blunt \$2.7 billion; WI-Johnson \$2.1 billion)

⁴ Author's calculations based on data of public costs in *The High Public Cost of Low Wages*, (Tables 5 and 6), Ken Jacobs, Ian Perry, and Jenifer MacGillvary, UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education (April 2015). See: <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2015/the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages.pdf>

The Leading 2016 Senate Battleground Races

Winning a substantial federal minimum wage increase in the near future will require defeating Republicans in this election cycle. With only a few weeks until Election Day, many analysts believe Democrats who support a federal minimum wage increase have a good chance of winning the White House, taking back the majority in the Senate, and making significant inroads against Republican control of the House.

Beyond the presidency, the most critical races this year are for seats in the U.S. Senate.

To attain a working majority in the Senate and ensure the ability to schedule a vote on raising the federal minimum wage, Democrats will need to win at least four Republican-held seats in the 2016 election—five if they do not win the presidency—and retain the 10 seats they hold that are up in this cycle. A loss of any of those 10 seats would mean they would need to win that many more seats currently held by Republicans.

Fourteen Senate races this election year are considered competitive, including 12 of the 24 Republican-held seats that are up in 2016, plus the Democratic-held seats from Nevada (held by retiring Minority Leader Harry Reid) and Colorado. Polling averages for those races, as of October 3rd, show eight rated “toss ups,” two “leaning” for the Democrat, and the other four “likely” Republican.⁵

Below, we look at these 14 states, the races, and the data.

Arizona

Republican Senator John McCain is seeking reelection, having won a fifth Senate term in 2010. Democratic Representative Ann Kirkpatrick is challenging McCain for the Senate in 2016. Kirkpatrick supports raising the federal minimum wage, so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. John McCain has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has voted against increasing the minimum wage more than 20 times.

- John McCain [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- In 2007, McCain [voted in favor](#) of legislation to allow states to set minimum wages **lower** than the federal minimum wage, effectively eliminating a federal minimum wage standard.
- The minimum wage in Arizona is only slightly higher than the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round at Arizona’s minimum wage of \$8.05 per hour would earn more than \$3,000 less per year than the poverty level for a three-person household.
- John McCain’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **1.1 million** workers in Arizona who are paid less than \$15 per hour—46 percent of the state’s workforce—including **856,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Arizona is more than **\$4.4 billion** annually.
- John McCain is one of 44 Senate Republican [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage.
- **258,000** salaried workers in Arizona who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if John McCain and his Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.

⁵ See: http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/senate/2016_elections_senate_map.html

- **[Polls show](#) Arizona voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator John McCain's opposition puts his challenger, Democrat Ann Kirkpatrick, in the lead.**
 - By a margin of 68 to 28, voters in Arizona support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 60 to 37, voters in Arizona support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in Arizona initially have McCain and Kirkpatrick tied at 43 to 43.
 - After considering the candidates' positions on raising the minimum wage, Arizona voters give Kirkpatrick a six-point lead over McCain.
 - **[By a margin of 77 to 16](#)**, Arizona voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senator McCain and Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 55 to 22, Arizona voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

Colorado

Democratic Senator Michael Bennet is running for reelection in 2016, seeking a second full term. Darryl Glenn, a county commissioner and former city councilmember from Colorado Springs, is the Republican candidate challenging Bennet for the Senate this year. Michael Bennet supports raising the federal minimum wage, so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Bennet also supports the 2016 [Colorado ballot initiative](#) to raise the state minimum wage to \$12 by 2020. Darryl Glenn is opposed to the federal minimum wage and opposes any minimum wage increases.

- Senator Michael Bennet [voted in favor](#) of raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 in 2014.
- The minimum wage in Colorado is only slightly higher than the federal \$7.25 minimum wage.
- Someone working full time, year-round for Colorado's \$8.31 per hour minimum wage would earn nearly \$3,000 per year less than the federal poverty level for a three-person household.
- If elected to the Senate, Darryl Glenn's continued opposition to raising the federal minimum wage could deny raises to as many as **948,000** workers in Colorado who are paid less than \$15 per hour—nearly 40 percent of the state's workforce—including **669,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Colorado is **\$1.7 billion** annually.
- Senator Michael Bennet supports the Obama administration's rule expanding overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers. Colorado's Republican Senator Cory Gardner is one of 44 Senate Republicans [cosponsoring](#) a resolution to block implementation of the rule expanding overtime protections. Darryl Glenn would likely oppose the overtime expansion if elected.
- **248,000** salaried workers in Colorado who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Congressional Republicans block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Florida

Republican Senator Marco Rubio is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Representative Patrick Murphy, a Democrat, is challenging Rubio for the Senate in 2016. Murphy supports gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$15, so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Marco Rubio opposes minimum wage increases and called them “a disaster” during a presidential primary debate. Rubio voted against raising the minimum wage in 2014 and 2015 and has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage above its current poverty-level of \$7.25—even though he has said, [“You can’t live on \\$10 an hour. You can’t live on \\$11 an hour.”](#)

- Marco Rubio [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- The minimum wage in Florida is only slightly higher than the \$7.25 federal minimum wage.
- Someone working full time, year-round at Florida’s minimum wage of \$8.05 per hour would earn more than \$3,000 less per year than the poverty level for a three-person household.
- Marco Rubio’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **3.8 million** workers in Florida who are paid less than \$15 per hour—half of the state’s workforce—including more than **2.7 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- Rubio spent nine years as a member of the Florida House of Representatives opposing legislation to raise Florida’s minimum wage. Only a voter-approved ballot initiative in 2004 finally raised it above the federal level and established annual cost-of-living adjustments.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Florida is **\$8.8 billion** annually.
- Marco Rubio is one of the 44 Republican Senate [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **More than 1 million** salaried workers in Florida who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Marco Rubio and his Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Georgia

Republican Senator Johnny Isakson is seeking reelection to a third term, having first won the seat in 2004. Democrat Jim Barksdale is challenging Isakson for the Senate in 2016. Barksdale supports raising the federal minimum wage, first to \$10 and then further increases to the \$12 to \$15 range, so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Isakson has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Senator Isakson [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- Georgia is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Johnny Isakson’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **1.8 million** workers in Georgia who are paid less than \$15 per hour—47 percent of the state’s workforce—including more than **1.3 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.

- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Georgia is **\$5.5 billion** annually.
- Isakson is one of 44 Senate Republicans who are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration's expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **493,000** salaried workers in Georgia who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Isakson and his Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Illinois

Republican Senator Mark Kirk is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Democratic Representative Tammy Duckworth is challenging Kirk for the Senate in 2016. Tammy Duckworth supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Mark Kirk voted against raising the minimum wage in 2014 and 2015 and has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage above its current poverty-level of \$7.25.

- Mark Kirk [voted "No"](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- The minimum wage in Illinois is only slightly higher than the \$7.25 federal minimum wage.
- Working full time, year-round, a person paid the Illinois minimum wage of \$8.25 would earn \$3,000 per year less than the federal poverty level for a three-person household.
- Mark Kirk's opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **2.2 million** workers in Illinois who are paid less than \$15 per hour—41 percent of the state's workforce—including more than **1.6 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- In 2006, Kirk voted **six times** against raising the minimum wage as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Illinois is **\$6.1 billion** annually.
- 44 of Mark Kirk's Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration's expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **539,000** salaried workers in Illinois who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Mark Kirk's Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Indiana

Republican Representative Todd Young is running for the Senate seat held by Republican Senator Dan Coats, who is retiring. Former senator and former Indiana governor Evan Bayh, a Democrat, is running to reclaim the Senate seat he left in 2011. Bayh supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Todd Young opposes raising the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Rep. Todd Young voted in the House against raising the federal minimum wage above \$7.25 [in 2013](#) and again [in 2014](#).

- Indiana is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- If elected to the Senate, Todd Young’s continued opposition to raising the federal minimum wage could deny raises to as many as **1.3 million** workers in Indiana who are paid less than \$15 per hour—47 percent of the state’s workforce—including nearly **950,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Indiana is **\$2.4 billion** annually.
- Todd Young opposes the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers. Indiana’s retiring Republican Senator Dan Coats is one of 44 Senate Republicans who are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the administration’s rule expanding overtime coverage.
- **248,000** salaried workers in Indiana who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Congressional Republicans block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Iowa

Republican Senator Charles Grassley is seeking reelection for a seventh term, having first won the seat in 1980. Democrat Patty Judge, the former lieutenant governor and former secretary of agriculture of Iowa, is challenging Grassley for the Senate in 2016. Judge supports gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Grassley has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Senator Grassley [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- Iowa is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Chuck Grassley’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **630,000** workers in Iowa who are paid less than \$15 per hour—44 percent of the state’s workforce—including more than **434,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Iowa is **\$1.2 billion** annually.
- 44 of Chuck Grassley’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **124,000** salaried workers in Iowa who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Grassley’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.

Missouri

Republican Senator Roy Blunt is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Democratic Secretary of State Jason Kander is challenging Burr for the Senate in 2016. Jason Kander supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Roy Blunt has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Roy Blunt [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.

- The minimum wage in Missouri is only slightly higher than the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for the Missouri minimum wage of \$7.65 would earn less than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Roy Blunt’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **1.2 million** workers in Missouri who are paid less than \$15 per hour—nearly half of the state’s workforce—including **881,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Missouri is more than **\$2.7 billion** annually.
- 44 of Roy Blunt’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **258,000** salaried workers in Missouri who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Roy Blunt’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **[Polls show](#) Missouri voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Roy Blunt’s opposition flips the lead against him.**
 - By a margin of 67 to 26, voters in Missouri support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 57 to 38, voters in Missouri support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in Missouri initially give Blunt a four-point lead over his challenger, Jason Kander.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, Missouri voters give a four-point lead to Kander over Blunt—a net change of 8 points.
 - [By a margin of 76 to 16](#), Missouri voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 53 to 18, Missouri voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

Nevada

Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, the former attorney general of Nevada, is running for the Senate seat held by Democratic Senator Harry Reid, the minority leader, who is retiring. Republican Representative Joe Heck is running for that seat in 2016. Cortez Masto supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Joe Heck opposes raising the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Rep. Joe Heck voted in the House against raising the federal minimum wage above \$7.25 [in 2013](#) and again [in 2014](#).
- The minimum wage in Nevada is only slightly higher than the federal \$7.25 minimum wage.
- Someone working full time, year-round for Nevada’s \$8.25 per hour minimum wage would earn \$3,000 per year less than the federal poverty level for a three-person household.
- If elected to the Senate, Joe Heck’s continued opposition to raising the federal minimum wage could deny raises to as many as **535,000** workers in Nevada who are paid less than \$15 per hour—45 percent of the state’s workforce—including **360,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.

- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Nevada is **\$850 million** annually.
- Joe Heck opposes the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers. Heck is a [cosponsor](#) of a House resolution, identical to one cosponsored by [44 Senate Republicans](#), to block implementation of the rule expanding overtime protections.
- **115,000** salaried workers in Nevada who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Representative Heck and Congressional Republicans block implementation of the new overtime rule.

New Hampshire

Republican Senator Kelly Ayotte is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Democratic Governor Maggie Hassan is challenging Ayotte for the Senate in 2016. Maggie Hassan supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Kelly Ayotte has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Kelly Ayotte [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- New Hampshire is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Kelly Ayotte’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **225,000** workers in New Hampshire who are paid less than \$15 per hour—more than a third of the state’s workforce—including **154,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in New Hampshire is **\$448 million** annually.
- 44 of Kelly Ayotte’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **55,000** salaried workers in New Hampshire who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Kelly Ayotte’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **[Polls show](#) New Hampshire voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Kelly Ayotte’s opposition to it costs her voter support.**
 - By a margin of 74 to 24, voters in New Hampshire support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 63 to 34, voters in New Hampshire support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in New Hampshire initially give Maggie Hassan a two-point lead over Kelly Ayotte.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, New Hampshire voters give Hassan a five-point lead over Ayotte—a net increase for Hassan of three points.
 - [By a margin of 76 to 18](#), New Hampshire voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senate Republicans seek to block.

- By a margin of 52 to 23, New Hampshire voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

North Carolina

Republican Senator Richard Burr is seeking reelection, having won a second term in 2010. Democratic candidate Deborah Ross is challenging Burr for the Senate in 2016. Deborah Ross supports raising the federal minimum wage so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Richard Burr has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Richard Burr [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- In 2007, Burr [voted in favor](#) of legislation to allow states to set minimum wages **lower** than the federal minimum wage, effectively eliminating a federal minimum wage standard.
- North Carolina is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Richard Burr’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **1.9 million** workers in North Carolina who are paid less than \$15 per hour—nearly half of the state’s workforce—including more than **1.3 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in North Carolina is more than **\$4.8 billion** annually.
- 44 of Richard Burr’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **425,000** salaried workers in North Carolina who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Richard Burr’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **[Polls show North Carolina voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Richard Burr’s opposition flips the lead against him.](#)**
 - By a margin of 72 to 23, voters in North Carolina support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 61 to 34, voters in North Carolina support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in North Carolina initially give Burr a three-point lead over his challenger, Deborah Ross.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, North Carolina voters give a three-point lead to Ross over Burr—a net change of six points.
 - [By a margin of 79 to 14](#), North Carolina voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 52 to 20, North Carolina voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

Ohio

Republican Senator Rob Portman is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Former Democratic Governor Ted Strickland is challenging Portman for the Senate in 2016. Strickland supports raising the federal minimum wage to at least \$12 so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Rob Portman has opposed raising the federal minimum wage and voted against raising it to \$10.10 in 2014.

- Rob Portman [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- The minimum wage in Ohio is only slightly higher than the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round at Ohio’s minimum wage of \$8.10 per hour would earn more than \$3,000 less per year than the poverty level for a three-person household.
- Rob Portman’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **2.2 million** workers in Ohio who are paid less than \$15 per hour—45 percent of the state’s workforce—including more than **1.6 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Ohio is more than **\$5.2 billion** annually.
- 44 of Rob Portman’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **351,000** salaried workers in Ohio who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Rob Portman’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **[Polls show Ohio voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Rob Portman’s opposition to it costs him voter support.](#)**
 - By a margin of 70 to 26, voters in Ohio support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 60 to 36, voters in Ohio support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in Ohio initially give Rob Portman a nine-point lead over Ted Strickland.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, Portman’s lead shrinks to just six points over Strickland—a net decrease for Portman of three points.
 - [By a margin of 80 to 14](#), Ohio voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 51 to 18, Ohio voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

Pennsylvania

Republican Senator Pat Toomey is seeking reelection, having won the seat in 2010. Democratic candidate Katie McGinty is challenging Toomey for the Senate in 2016. Katie McGinty supports raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 over time so that no one who works full time has to live in poverty. Pat Toomey has opposed every effort to raise the federal minimum wage and has repeatedly voted against increasing it.

- Pat Toomey [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.

- Pennsylvania is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Pat Toomey’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **2.2 million** workers in Pennsylvania who are paid less than \$15 per hour—more than 41 percent of the state’s workforce—including more than **1.5 million** who are paid less than \$12 an hour.
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Pennsylvania is **\$5 billion** annually.
- 44 of Pat Toomey’s Republican Senate colleagues are [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage for modestly paid salaried workers.
- **459,000** salaried workers in Pennsylvania who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Pat Toomey’s Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **Polls show Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Pat Toomey’s opposition to it costs him voter support.**
 - By a margin of 74 to 23, voters in Pennsylvania support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 62 to 35, voters in Pennsylvania support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in Pennsylvania initially give Katie McGinty a six-point lead over Pat Toomey.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, Pennsylvania voters give McGinty a nine-point lead over Toomey—a net increase for McGinty of three points.
 - [By a margin of 81 to 15](#), Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 57 to 16, Pennsylvania voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

Wisconsin

Republican Senator Ron Johnson is seeking reelection, having won the seat previously held by Democrat Russ Feingold in 2010. Feingold, an outspoken supporter of a \$15 minimum wage, is challenging Johnson for the seat in 2016.

- Ron Johnson [voted “No”](#) in 2014 on a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10.
- Wisconsin is one of [21 states](#) stuck at the poverty-level \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Someone working full time, year-round for \$7.25 would earn \$1,000 less per year than the poverty level for a two-person household.
- Ron Johnson’s opposition to raising the federal minimum wage is denying raises to as many as **1.1 million** Wisconsinites who are paid less than \$15 per hour, more than 43 percent of the state’s workforce, including more than **810,000** who are paid less than \$12 an hour. Johnson is a long-standing opponent of raising the minimum wage and has [stated he would prefer there be no federal minimum wage at all](#).
- The public cost of aid to working families caused by low wages in Wisconsin is **\$2.1 billion** annually.

- Ron Johnson is one of 44 Senate Republican [cosponsors](#) of a resolution to block the Obama administration’s expansion of overtime pay coverage.
- **187,000** salaried workers in Wisconsin who are paid less than \$47,476 per year would be denied the right to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 per week if Johnson and his Republican Senate colleagues block implementation of the new overtime rule.
- **[Polls show](#) Wisconsin voters overwhelmingly support raising the federal minimum wage and that Senator Ron Johnson’s opposition to it costs him voter support.**
 - By a margin of 70 to 26, voters in Wisconsin support raising the federal minimum wage.
 - By a margin of 63 to 33, voters in Wisconsin support gradually raising the federal minimum wage to \$10, then to \$12 and \$15 over several years.
 - Voters in Wisconsin initially give Russ Feingold a seven-point lead over Ron Johnson.
 - After considering the candidates’ positions on raising the minimum wage, Wisconsin voters give Feingold a 12-point lead over Johnson—a net increase for Feingold of five points.
 - [By a margin of 81 to 14](#), Wisconsin voters overwhelmingly support the federal expansion of overtime pay coverage for salaried workers making less than \$47,476 a year—an expansion that Ron Johnson and Senate Republicans seek to block.
 - By a margin of 56 to 17, Wisconsin voters say they are less likely to support Senate or House candidates who seek to block the overtime pay expansion.

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24 Republican Senate Seats Up for Election in 2016

| State | Min. Wage | Incumbent or Candidate | # of Workers Paid Less than \$12/hr. ¹ | % of Workforce Paid Less than \$12/hr. | # of Workers Paid Less than \$15/hr. | % of Workforce Paid Less than \$15/hr. | 2014 Vote on Min. Wage ² | # of Salaried Workers Gaining OT |
|----------------|-----------|------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Alabama | \$7.25 | Sen. Richard Shelby | 688,591 | 37% | 948,134 | 50.9% | No | 167,000 |
| Alaska | \$9.75 | Sen. Lisa Murkowski | 74,017 | 23.3% | 105,279 | 33.2% | No | 16,000 |
| Arizona | \$8.05 | Sen. John McCain | 856,734 | 33.3% | 1,185,167 | 46% | No | 258,000 |
| Arkansas | \$8.00 | Sen. John Boozman | 451,446 | 39.6% | 617,406 | 54.1% | Did not vote | 130,000 |
| Florida | \$8.05 | Sen. Marco Rubio | 2,753,645 | 35.8% | 3,853,759 | 50.1% | No | 1,068,000 |
| Georgia | \$7.25 | Sen. Johnny Isakson | 1,374,595 | 34.2% | 1,891,734 | 47.1% | No | 493,000 |
| Idaho | \$7.25 | Sen. Mike Crapo | 251,013 | 39.6% | 337,767 | 53.3% | No | 64,000 |
| Illinois | \$8.25 | Sen. Mark Kirk | 1,624,748 | 29% | 2,293,974 | 41% | No | 539,000 |
| Indiana | \$7.25 | Rep. Todd Young | 949,994 | 33.4% | 1,338,152 | 47% | ‡ | 248,000 |
| Iowa | \$7.25 | Sen. Chuck Grassley | 434,430 | 30.9% | 630,214 | 44.8% | No | 124,000 |
| Kansas | \$7.25 | Sen. Jerry Moran | 413,360 | 32.9% | 584,117 | 46.5% | No | 98,000 |
| Kentucky | \$7.25 | Sen. Rand Paul | 629,492 | 36.1% | 871,808 | 50% | No | 148,000 |
| Louisiana | \$7.25 | *Kennedy/Boustany | 658,366 | 35.7% | 896,431 | 48.7% | ‡ | 174,000 |
| Missouri | \$7.65 | Sen. Roy Blunt | 881,848 | 34.5% | 1,241,100 | 48.5% | No | 258,000 |
| New Hampshire | \$7.25 | Sen. Kelly Ayotte | 154,927 | 24.4% | 225,305 | 35.5% | No | 55,000 |
| North Carolina | \$7.25 | Sen. Richard Burr | 1,394,368 | 34.7% | 1,998,258 | 49.7% | No | 425,000 |
| North Dakota | \$7.25 | Sen. John Hoeven | 96,647 | 28.3% | 147,659 | 43.2% | No | 34,000 |
| Ohio | \$8.10 | Sen. Rob Portman | 1,612,661 | 32.2% | 2,264,247 | 45.2% | No | 351,000 |
| Oklahoma | \$7.25 | Sen. James Lankford | 563,265 | 36% | 795,106 | 50.8% | Not in office | 154,000 |
| Pennsylvania | \$7.25 | Sen. Pat Toomey | 1,588,086 | 28.7% | 2,299,726 | 41.5% | No | 459,000 |
| South Carolina | \$7.25 | Sen. Tim Scott | 734,341 | 37.7% | 1,008,336 | 51.8% | No | 219,000 |
| South Dakota | \$8.55 | Sen. John Thune | 137,172 | 35% | 202,042 | 51.6% | No | 32,000 |
| Utah | \$7.25 | Sen. Mike Lee | 439,930 | 35.4% | 602,948 | 48.5% | No | 118,000 |
| Wisconsin | \$7.25 | Sen. Ron Johnson | 812,934 | 30.5% | 1,165,040 | 43.8% | No | 187,000 |
| Totals | | | 19,576,610 | 33.26% | 27,503,709 | 46.78% | | 5,819,000 |

1. These data and others on numbers of workers paid less than \$12 per hour and less than \$15 per hour, as well as numbers of salaried workers benefiting from the new overtime rule, are calculations based on data contained in <https://policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org/work/poverty-in-the-us/low-wage-map/>; Oxfam America/Economic Policy Institute, 2016.

2. Senate Roll Call Vote 117, April 30, 2014, 113th Congress.

Source: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=2&vote=00117#position.

* Likely candidates in potential December 10th run-off if no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote in Louisiana general election.

‡ The seats held by Senator Dan Coats (R-IN) and Senator David Vitter (R-LA) are up for election in 2016, but neither is seeking reelection. In 2014, Coats and Vitter both voted "No".