

**KENNEDY CONTINUES FIGHT FOR CLEAN MINIMUM WAGE BILL**

**STATEMENT BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY BEFORE MINIMUM WAGE  
CLOTURE VOTE**

*(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY)*

From our earliest days, we have been a nation of strong values. Fairness. Opportunity. Concern for our fellow citizens. While we are a country of individualists, we have always recognized that America is strongest when we all prosper together. One of the earliest governing documents in our history – the Mayflower Compact – talked about laws that would support “the general good.” Later, in the preamble to our Constitution, we pledged that our government would “promote the general welfare.”

That is our proud history. Our nation has thrived because we have made a commitment to shared prosperity. The vote we will cast today is a measure of our commitment to these values.

Minimum wage workers have been waiting for a raise for ten long and difficult years. They have worked more than one job. They have saved every penny they can for the future of their children. They have decided each day what food they can afford and what bills they can pay.

Americans understand fairness, and they know this is unfair. They’ve called on us time and again to raise the minimum wage, but time and again – year after year – this Congress has turned its back on working families.

It is wrong that hard-working men and women cannot afford to put food on the table or heat their homes. It is wrong that our productivity soars, but our lowest-paid workers fall further and further behind. And it would be wrong to demand a price of more and more tax breaks before these hard working families get the raise they have earned.

Congress has voted itself a raise eight times over the past ten years, while minimum wage workers have received nothing. Congress never demanded a price for increasing its wages. So why should we demand a price for giving minimum wage workers a raise? What’s good enough for Congress surely is good enough for America’s workers. I say Congress should do unto others what it has done for itself.

And we haven’t just been doing for ourselves. Over the last 10 years we’ve done a whole lot for corporate America. We’ve given them 276 billion dollars in corporate tax breaks.

We’ve done a lot for the wealthiest Americans, who’ve seen their incomes skyrocket with generous tax giveaways. Why can’t we do just one thing for minimum wage workers? No strings attached, no giveaways for the powerful – why can’t we do just this one thing simply because it’s the right thing to do?

Minimum wage workers are men and women of dignity. They do some of the most difficult, back-breaking jobs in our society. They clean our office buildings. They serve our food. They take care of our children in preschools, and care for our elderly in nursing homes. They deserve a fair wage that respects the dignity of their work, and they shouldn't have to live in poverty.

President Kennedy once said "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." We are a rich nation, but unless we do more to help the poorest Americans, we will not be able to save ourselves.

We have an opportunity today to take one bold step toward solving the problem of poverty in this great nation. Today – right now – we can pass the House bill, and send it to the President.

We can raise the minimum wage and give 13 million hardworking people hope for a brighter future.

I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join me in voting for minimum wage workers today. This shouldn't be a partisan issue. It's about standing behind our values. It's long past time to do the right thing and give minimum wage workers a raise.