



FAIRNESS INITIATIVE

on Low-Wage Work

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“Minimum Wage Improvements and Paid Sick Leave Overwhelmingly Supported by 2006 Voters, Gender Gap Exists”

WASHINGTON—On the eve of the 2006 elections the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW) has released the results of a comprehensive nationwide poll of more than 2,000 registered voters noting that by overwhelming margins voters favor Congressional candidates in this year’s elections who favor an increase in the minimum wage and a substantial portion of the electorate favor paid sick days for all workers.

Currently, 23 states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation that has increased their state-based minimum wage by more than the \$5.15 federal standard last improved in 1997. Six states will have ballot initiatives in this year’s election that call for an increase in state-based minimum wages. They are: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio. In each state the individual ballot initiative on the minimum-wage is favored by 60-70% of voters, according to polls.

Presently, 39% of all low-wage workers, defined as having an income of less than about \$39,000 per year (twice the federal poverty rate) have no sick leave. One-quarter of the workforce consists of low-wage workers.

“Americans working hard and struggling to support themselves and their families deserve a fairer minimum wage and should not have to choose between getting sick and losing their job,” said NCRW President Linda Basch.

Women are 7 times more likely than less likely to vote for a candidate who supports raising the minimum wage, and 5 times more likely than less likely to vote for a candidate who favors guaranteed paid sick days. The complete poll results taken between September 28 and October 9 of 2,097 registered voters by Opinion Research Corporation with a margin of plus or minus 2% can be found at the bottom of this release.

Highlights of the nationwide poll are:

Minimum Wage: 72% of women and 63% of men would be more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who supports the increase of the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. Further, 56% of Republican women favor Congressional candidates who support an increase in the minimum wage and 61% of all married mothers support an increase.

Paid Sick Leave: 61% of women and 46% of men would be more likely to support a candidate for Congress who supports paid sick leave for all workers. Further, 48% of Republican women would vote for Congressional candidates who support guaranteed paid sick leave for all workers.