

Darwin

**ALASKA COALITION ON
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS**

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Dear Senator Stedman,

I am the chair of the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, a state wide nonprofit whose mission is to work to develop strategies to alleviate homelessness and to increase the availability of affordable housing in Alaska. A step towards achieving affordable housing is paying a livable wage that values workers and helps them achieve independence and the dignity to support themselves and their families.

I would like to take a few moments of your time to remind you of a bill in the Senate, Senate Bill 1, "An Act increasing the minimum hourly wage; and providing for an effective date". This proposed legislation is sponsored by Senators Wielechowski, Ellis, Thomas, Davis, French, Paskvan and Menard is important to the working poor of Alaska.

At the current minimum wage, working full-time, the average Alaskan grosses \$1,144. An average two bedroom in Anchorage is \$1,013. This leaves little for food, transportation, insurance, childcare and other costs. Even with a subsidized rent, it still leaves Alaskan families scrimping to ensure that they and their children are adequately housed, fed and cared for.

Alaska's minimum wage is currently \$7.15 per hour. Washington state's minimum wage is \$8.55 and Oregon is \$8.40. At this time, with rising costs, it is important to recognize that Alaskans deserve more than \$7.15 per hour to meet their needs and the needs of their family. Senate Bill 1 would require that Alaskans receive \$1 more than the federal minimum wage beginning January 2010. This is only a start in meeting the needs of low income and poor Alaskans and addressing the rising cost of living in Alaska. While we appreciate the intent of this bill and support passage of an increase in minimum wage in Alaska, we would also like to see a cost of living increase be considered such as in House Bill 125.

I have attached a resolution, endorsed by our membership, to support an increase of the minimum wage in Alaska. Thank you for your service and attention to this important issue.

Feel free to contact me at 907-743-5726 or suzi_p@awaic.org.

Sincerely,



Suzi Pearson
Chair

PO Box 200862
Anchorage, AK 99520

PHONE (907) 743-5726
FAX (907) suzi_p@awaic.org
WEB SITE

Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness

Resolution #2009-1

WHEREAS, the Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness is an organization dedicated to improving access to affordable housing for all Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness recognizes that a living wage is necessary in order to improve access to and maintain affordable housing and that the current median cost of rent for a family in Anchorage is \$1,013 according to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and

WHEREAS, according to the most recent figures available from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, there are approximately 14,000 Alaskans earning the minimum wage; and

WHEREAS, the current minimum wage rate is \$7.15/hour (\$14,300/year [40 hours x 50 weeks]); and

WHEREAS, the current minimum wage rate is not sufficient to enable Alaska's working poor to obtain basic needs including affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, the current minimum wage rate adopted by the legislature in 2002, effective 2003, has remained unchanged since then, notwithstanding increases in the cost of living;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness supports an increase in the state's minimum wage rate and urges the Alaska State Legislature to adopt a minimum wage rate increase during the 2009 legislative session; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness supports automatic indexing of the state's minimum wage rates so the wages of Alaska's working poor keep pace with the cost of living and urges the Alaska State Legislature to adopt automatic indexing during the 2009 legislative session.

ADOPTED THIS 18th DAY OF MARCH, 2009

ATTEST:



Suzi Pearson, Chair
Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness