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OVER 1,000 FAITH LEADERS URGE CONGRESS TO RAISE MINIMUM WAGE

Washington, DC -- Let Justice Roll, a nonpartisan coalition of ninety faith and community organizations, today sent a letter to members of Congress signed by more than 1,000 Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders from across the country. Anticipating House debate on minimum wage this Wednesday, Jan. 10, faith leaders urge congressional support for The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 (HR 2), which would increase the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 from the \$5.15 level set in 1997.

"As people of faith, we believe there is no better way to urgently address the poverty that afflicts so many low-wage working people and their families than by raising the minimum wage," said Rev. Dr. Paul Sherry, National Coordinator of Let Justice Roll and co-author of "A Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future." Sherry added, "A job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it. That conviction is at the very heart of the faith we proclaim."

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, said, "We seek a just community for all people. We are a decade late in even beginning to raise the minimum wage toward a living wage. We call on Congress to remember the least among us, and raise the minimum wage without any further delay."

In December, the nation broke the record for the longest period in history -- more than nine years -- without a minimum wage raise, while Congress's ninth pay raise since 1997 is scheduled to take effect in February. Today, a full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour makes an unconscionable \$10,712 annually. Although worker productivity and corporate profits are both way up, the buying power of today's minimum wage is lower than it was in 1950.

As the faith leaders' letter states, "The strong victory on all the minimum wage ballot initiatives is evidence that there is strong and widespread support from Americans for a prompt, clean minimum wage increase at the federal level."

"Millions of 'values voters' care about fair wages for the people who do some of the hardest jobs in our society," said Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches and former six-term congressman from Pennsylvania. "Now it's up to their representatives to listen and pass a clean bill on to the Senate."

Two Let Justice Roll member groups -- Jewish Funds for Justice and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism -- are releasing a complementary letter today signed by over 400 rabbis and rabbinical students in support of the Fair Minimum Wage Act (contacts: Mik Moore, JFSJ, at 646-670-8249; Rachel Slomovitz, RAC, at 202-387-2800).

Let Justice Roll is also spearheading a business leaders' campaign, aimed at dispelling the myth that a higher minimum wage harms business and showing how a higher wage floor benefits business, workers and our economy. For more information: www.letjusticeroll.org.

To arrange interviews with faith leaders or businesspeople in support of a higher minimum wage, please contact Peter Bermudes at 781-704-4039 or bermudes@verizon.net. The full text of the letter and a partial list of signatories follow below. For a complete list of signatories in formation, please visit <http://www.letjusticeroll.org/pdfs/20070105NationalMinWageLetter.pdf>.

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“There is nothing but a lack of social vision to prevent us from paying an adequate wage to every American [worker] whether he is a hospital worker, laundry worker, maid, or day laborer.”

-- The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 5, 2007

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned religious leaders, in partnership with the *Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign*, call on the 110th Congress to raise the minimum wage! *Let Justice Roll* is a nonpartisan coalition of more than 80 faith, community and labor organizations working to raise the minimum wage at the state and federal level. In 2006, we played a major role in increasing the minimum wage throughout the country at the state level.

We strongly support the Miller/Kennedy bill that increases the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. Furthermore, we strongly oppose any attempts to add provisions to the bill. We urge you to vote for this clean minimum wage bill.

The Prophet Amos proclaims, *“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”* (5:24, NRSV). We are morally outraged by the number of people living in poverty in the United States, and believe that now is the time to give hard-working low-wage workers a raise and take the first step toward a true living wage for America’s workers.

It has been nearly 10 years since the last federal increase in the minimum wage, and low-wage workers urgently need a raise. A minimum wage employee -- making \$5.15 an hour, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns about \$10,700 a year -- about \$6,000 below the federal poverty line for a family of three. This situation is unconscionable and immoral, as the wealth of our nation continues to be built on the backs of the working poor. Working poor families in America are struggling to meet the rising costs of health care, gasoline and housing, and \$5.15 an hour is simply not enough.

Minimum wage legislation in the past has stalled in Congress because of attempts to attach unrelated provisions such as tying the minimum wage to a repeal of the estate tax, rolling back over-time protections or reducing the minimum wage of tip workers. In addition, such provisions are harmful to the very workers that a minimum wage increase is intended to help. The strong victory on all the minimum wage ballot initiatives is evidence that there is strong and widespread support from Americans for a prompt, clean minimum wage increase at the federal level.

We appreciate the commitment made by the leadership of the 110th Congress to address the woefully inadequate federal minimum wage. We will continue to raise our voices on behalf of “the least of these” and proclaim that *a job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it.*

Signed,

Rev. Dr. Paul Sherry, National Coordinator, Let Justice Roll, Cleveland, OH

Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, General Secretary, National Council of Churches, New York, NY

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church, NY, NY

Rev. Jim Wallis, President and CEO, Sojourners/Call to Renewal, Washington, DC

Rev. John H. Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ, Cleveland, OH

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Washington DC

Rev. Dr. Roy Medley, Gen. Secretary, American Baptist Churches in the USA, Valley Forge, PA

Rev. Jennifer Butler, Executive Director, Faith in Public Life, Washington, DC
Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA
Rev. William G. Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, MA
The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Senior Minister, The Riverside Church, New York, NY
The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA, Louisville, KY
Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, Gen. Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Roy Riley, Chair of the Conference of Bishops and Bishop of the NJ Synod ELCA, NJ
Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Archdiocese of Detroit, MI
Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey, Executive Director, The Alliance of Baptists, Washington, DC
James E. Winkler, General Secretary, United Methodist Church, Gen. Board of Church in Society, Washington, DC
Rev. Michael Livingston, President, National Council of Churches and Executive Director, ICCC, Trenton, NJ
Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director, Church World Service
Charlie Clements, President, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Cambridge, MA
Rabbi Rebecca Alpert, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
Most Reverend Gabino Zavala, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
Rev. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, Director, Faith Voices for the Common Good, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Oakland, CA
David A. Robinson, Executive Director Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement, Washington, DC
Simon Greer, President and CEO, Jewish Funds for Justice, New York, NY
Dr. Michael Kinnamon, Chair, Justice and Advocacy Commission, National Council of Churches, St. Louis, MO
Sr. Catherine McDonnell, OP, Prioress of the Dominican Sister of Hope, Ossining, NY
Rev. Kim Bobo, Executive Director, Interfaith Worker Justice, Chicago, IL
Rev. Tom Youngblood, United Methodist, Decatur, AL
The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, Episcopal Bishop of Alaska and Navajoland, AK
Rev. Trina Zelle, Arizona Interfaith Worker Justice, Tempe, AZ
Rev. Briget Nicholson, Pastor, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Tucson, AZ
Rev. Stephen Copley, President, Arkansas Interfaith Conference, United Methodist Church, North Little Rock, AR
Imam Ali Siddiqui, Corona Valley, CA
The Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser, Executive Director, CA Council of Churches, California Church IMPACT, Sacramento CA
Bishop Allan C. Bjornberg, Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA, Denver, CO
Fidel "Butch" Montoya, Minister Confianza, An Association of Latino Ministers, Denver, CO
Sister Maureen McCormack, President, The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, Denver, CO
The Right Rev. James E. Curry, Bishop Suffragan, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, Hartford, CT
Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister, Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, Hartford, CT
Rev. Dr. William L. Rhines, Jr., Harriet R. Tubman United Methodist Church, New Castle, DE
The Rt. Rev. Philip M. Duncan, II, Bishop, Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Pensacola, FL
Rev. John F. Stanton, Associate Priest, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Miami, FL
Rev. Charles Buck, Conference Minister, Hawaii Conf. United Church of Christ, Honolulu, HI
The Rt. Rev. Harry B. Bainbridge, III, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Idaho, Boise, ID
Bishop Paul R. Landahl, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL
The Rev. Dr. Larry L. Greenfield, Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, Chicago, IL
Megan M Ramer, Pastor, Chicago Community Mennonite Church, Chicago, IL
The Rt. Rev. Catherine Waynick, Bishop of Indianapolis, IN

Rev. Stephen C. Gray, Conf. Minister, Indiana-Kentucky Conference, UCC, Indianapolis, IN
Rev. Dick Clark, Pastor, St. Timothy's United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls, IA
Sr. Joy Peterson, PBVM, President, Sisters of the Presentation of BVM, Dubuque, IA
Rev. David Hansen, Conference Minister, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference, United Church of Christ, Wichita, KS
Rev. Albert M. Pennybacker, Former National Chair, Clergy and Laity Network, Former Natl. President, The Interfaith Alliance, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lexington KY
Sr. Margaret Stallmeyer, CDP, Thomas More College President, Congregation of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY
Rev. David F. Kniker, Kewanee, LA
Rabbi Darah R. Lerner, Congregation Beth El, Bangor, ME
Rev. David R Gaewski, Conference Minister, Maine Conference, United Church of Christ, Yarmouth, ME
The Right Reverend Robert W. Ihloff, Episcopal Bishop of Maryland
Sr. Gayle Lwanga Crumbley, National Coordinator, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Silver Spring, MD
The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Conference Minister and President, Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ, Framingham, MA
Rabbi David Lerner, Temple Emunah, Lexington, MA
Johanna Chao Rittenburg, Economic Justice Program Manager, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Cambridge, MA
Rev. Dr. Kent J. Ulery, Conference Minister, Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, East Lansing MI
Lucinda Keils, Executive Director, Detroit Metropolitan Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, Detroit, MI
Rev. Peg Chamberlin, Executive Director, Minnesota Council of Churches, Minneapolis, MN
Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN
Rev. Charlene B. Burch, Interim Conference Minister, Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ, St. Louis. MO
Rev. W. Audrey Hollis, Organizer, St. Louis Area Jobs With Justice, St. Louis, MO
The Rev. Randall Hyvonen, Conference Minister, Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference, United Church of Christ, Billings, MT
Rev. F. Vernon Wright, Minister, UCC, Helena, MT
Rev. Dr. Dallas Dee Brauning, Burwell, NE
Mr. David Lamarre-Vincent, Exec. Dir., New Hampshire Council of Churches, Concord, NH
The Rev. Eleanor McLaughlin, Ph.D. Rector, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Berlin, NH
The Rev. Bruce H. Davidson, Dir., Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in NJ, Trenton, NJ
Frank McCann, Director, Just Neighbors Program, Summit, NJ
The Reverend Elizabeth Purdum, Pastor, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM
The Reverend Arthur Meyer, Manager, Pastoral Care Dept, San Juan Regional Medical Center, Farmington, NM
The Rt. Rev. Jack McKelvey, Episcopal Bishop of Rochester, NY
The Rt. Rev. Catherine S. Roskam, Bishop Suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of New York
Rev. Ned Wight, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY
Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Director of Education, Jewish Funds for Justice, New York, NY
Rev. Nelson Johnson, Board Chair, Interfaith Worker Justice, Greensboro, NC
Rev. Ginny N. Britt, Director, The Advocacy for the Poor, Winston-Salem, NC
Rev. Dr. Charles R. Traylor, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of the Northern Plains, Presbyterian Church (USA), Fargo, ND
Rt. Rev. Kenneth Price, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, Columbus, OH
Rev. Callon Holloway, Jr., Bishop for Southern Ohio Synod, ELCA, Columbus, OH

Rev. Rebecca Tollefson, Executive Director, Ohio Council of Churches, Columbus, OH
Rev. Ron Hooker, Chair of Church in the World Commission, Central-Southeast Association of the Ohio Conference UCC, Columbus, OH
Fr. Clark Sheckelford, Rector, Emmanuel Episcopal, Shawnee, OK
Rev. Robin Meyers, Pastor, Mayflower UCC, Oklahoma City, OK
Rev. John M. Gantt, interim Conference Minister, Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ, Portland, OR
Norene Goplen, Director, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Oregon, Portland OR
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Rabbi Gail Glicksman, Dean of Students, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Wyncote, PA
Rev. Christopher H. Bender, Pastor, Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church, Aliquippa, PA
Father Jack O'Malley, Labor Religion Coalition of Western PA
Rev. John Zehring, Kingston Congregational Church, Kingston, RI
Rev. Peter E. Lanzillotta, Ph.D., Minister, The Unitarian Church in Charleston, Charleston, SC
Bishop Craig B. Anderson (VIII South Dakota)- Retired, SD
Rev. Rebekah Jordan, Executive Director, Mid-South Interfaith Network for Economic Justice, Memphis, TN
Dr. Nabil Bayakly, Muslims in Memphis, Memphis, TN
Rev. Janet Wolf, United Methodist Clergy, Hobson United Methodist Church, Chair, Division of Church Vocations, American Baptist College, Nashville, TN
The Reverend Jeff St. Clair, Pastor, New Hope Lutheran Church, El Paso, TX
Rev. Tom VandeStadt, Pastor, Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ, TX
Linda Hilton, Director, Coalition of Religious Communities, Salt Lake City, UT
Kay Miller, Salt Lake City Police Dept Chaplain, All Saints Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City
The Rt. Rev. Neff Powell, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, Roanoke, VA
Rev. C. Douglas Smith, Executive Director, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, Richmond, VA
Francis X. Doyle, (retired) Associate General Secretary, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ashburn, VA
Rev. Paul Benz, Director, Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State
Don Kelly, Co-chair, UU Voices for Justice, Seattle, WA
Fr. James E. Hug, S.J., President, Center of Concern, Washington, DC
Rev. Marvin M Silver, United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries, Washington, DC
Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston, Director, Disciples Justice Action Network, Coordinator, Disciples Center for Public Witness, Washington, DC
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Rev. Romal J. Tune, CEO, Clergy Strategic Alliances, LLC, Washington, DC
Alexia Kelley, Executive Director, Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, Washington DC
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Rev. Lori Fell, Morgantown, WV
Scott Anderson, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Sun Prairie, WI
Rev. Robert Chapman, Pastor, Mount of Olives Lutheran Church, Rock Springs, WY

For a complete list of signatories in formation, please visit
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