

ONLY THE GOVERNMENT CAN CREATE LIVING-WAGE JOBS: HERE'S WHY?



Analysts believe that the only way that the American economy can be put back on the tracks is to bridge the gap between the 1 percent who have captured the money and the political power and the collapse of the labor market for the other 99 percent, that sees them jobless and barely managing to make ends meet. It is further alleged that the labor market collapse is because of the government's withdrawal from the labor market and allowing private parties to have a larger say in it. On the contrary the favored 1 percent has seen bank bailouts when they are in financial trouble, astronomical CEO salaries and unconcealed transgression by Wall Street and Congress. Not only is there a good jobs deficit, there is a continuance persistence of race and gender inequality. Wage theft is a recurring practice, with employers determined to cut labor costs, making for a very unequal fight between the two. To fight this inequality, the government must interfere and show that it cares. Unions with their dwindling membership are not the force they earlier were and the government is the only one that has the power and the resources to raise standards in the labor market. It does not mean that government should use strong-arm tactics and interfere in day-to-day business affairs. It just means that they should restore the core job standards that all American workers hold dear – simple things like respectable pay, safe and secure working conditions, unprejudiced access to jobs and that the money paid by the tax payer should not be utilized to create poverty wages. Here's how the government can ensure that the jobs start coming back: Laws that earlier set labor standards, like minimum wage, health and safety regulations and the power of unions have either declined or been stationary over the past thirty years. The \$7.25 an hour federal minimum wage is abysmally low. Workers in food chains and other areas where they are likely to get tips are even lower at \$2.13 an hour. Around 2.5 million home care workers are exempted from federal minimum wage and are exploited by their employers. Millions of subcontracted workers, independent contractors, day laborers are forced to work in extremely hazardous working conditions. Moreover, occupational illnesses and injuries have resulted in many preventable deaths. Paid sick days are not available to the US worker and almost 40 million workers risk their paycheck and their health and those around them when they report to work, even though they are sick. All the government has to do is to pass pending bills that would raise the minimum wage to \$9.80 in two years. Make paid sick days mandatory and pass the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights that would make life a lot easier for the homecare workers. Having a strong law will not be enough; they also have to be enforced. Currently US monitoring and enforcement of labor laws is very poor. Staffing levels are meager and it would take the OSHA current staff 131 years to inspect each workplace under its jurisdiction even once. Weak enforcement means that millions of workers are at the mercy of their employers and continue to be exploited. Once the government sets stringent labor standards, it still needs to create living wage jobs. The government must ensure that the low-income groups and communities of color get equal access to the jobs that open up, owing to these policies. The inequality-battle can only be fought with utilization of the full extent of the government's resources, the power and authority of federal legal standards and a national living wage agenda. The future of the country depends on how the country and its lawmakers meet this challenge.