



Key Findings of "Still Working Well: Washington's Minimum Wage and the Beginnings of Economic Recovery," by Marilyn P. Watkins, Ph.D.

Minimum wage facts:

- A full time worker at Washington's minimum wage of \$7.16 will earn \$14,893 in 2004, just below the poverty threshold for a family of three.
- Among workers earning within \$1 of minimum wage, 75% are over 20, nearly half work full time, and about one-third have children.
- In Washington, 3.5% of all jobs pay minimum wage, but 8.6% of workers earn within \$1.00 of minimum wage.
- Even with the highest minimum wage in the nation, minimum wage workers in Washington make about 15% less today in inflation adjusted dollars than in 1968.
- The federal minimum wage of \$5.15 has not increased since 1997, and has lost about \$1.00 in buying power.
- 66% of voters approved Washington's minimum wage law.
- 8 of the 11 states with a minimum wage above the federal level did better at job creation than the United States as a whole over the past 2 years – including Washington.

Jobs in low wage sectors of our economy are growing:

- Food service and drinking places are the single biggest employer of minimum wage workers in Washington. These jobs fell in 2002, but in 2003 grew to above pre-recession levels. Washington had 1,900 more food service jobs in November 2003 than in November 2002.
- According to Employment Security, two thirds of minimum wage food service workers are in fast food restaurants where they do not have access to tips.
- Jobs in retail trade and accommodations have not recovered fully from the recession, but grew in 2003.
- Jobs in nursing and residential care facilities continued to grow even during the recession.

Washington's unemployment rate has been among the highest in the nation because:

- 1) Historically, Washington's unemployment rate has almost always been above the national average, including 30 of the past 33 years;
- 2) Between June 1998 and November 2003, Washington lost 85,000 jobs in durable goods manufacturing. High wage manufacturing jobs have been leaving the United States as a whole, but over the past 2 years, Washington has suffered the highest rate of manufacturing job loss in the nation.
- 3) Washington's working age population is growing at a faster rate than the national average.