

To: Interested Parties
From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, Emily Garner, Lake Research Partners
Re: Polling Shows Consistent Support for Raising the Minimum Wage
Date: April 24, 2024

2024 promises to be a very tough election cycle. In order to win competitive races, Democrats will need to both fully consolidate and mobilize their base and bring over persuadable swing voters. Key demographics include young turnout voters, Latino swing and turnout voters, and white blue-collar swing voters, among others.

Wherever you look, public polls in 2024 will show that inflation and the cost of living are the top issues on voters' minds. This is true across the electorate broadly as well as in these key constituencies Democrats need to target:

- Polling from November 2023 of youth ages 18-34 showed inflation and the cost of living as far and away young people's number one concern – a majority rated it one of their top three priorities (53%). It is followed by a direct answer to the cost of living – jobs that pay a living wage (28%).ⁱ
- November 2023 polling of registered and eligible Latino voters tells a very similar story. Inflation and the rising cost of living was by far the top issue – a majority rated it one of their top three priorities (54%), followed by jobs and the economy (44%).ⁱⁱ
- February 2023 polling of voters living in small and midsized deindustrialized counties – dubbed Factory Towns – in swing states found the rising cost of living to be the top issue of these Factory Towns voters by a substantial margin. Over a third rated it one of their top two highest priorities (37%), followed by jobs and the economy (23%).ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite strong economic indicators – a stable labor market, slowing inflation, and rising wages – voters are not feeling more financially secure. Instead, they are feeling the pressure of persistently high prices for staple goods like gas and groceries as well as for big-ticket items like housing, student debt, and medical bills. Voters across the political spectrum express frustration with their financial situations, a dynamic that is likely to hurt Biden not only with swing voters, but with crucial base voters he cannot afford to lose.

- In 2020, 92% of Black voters voted for Biden. According to January 2024 polling, only three quarters of Black voters (75%) are planning to vote for Biden in 2024. Many say they are considering sitting out or voting third party.^{iv}
- In May 2023, three in ten Black Americans (30%) said their financial situation had worsened over the past year and over four in ten (44%) said it had stayed the same. Few reported experiencing the benefits of a supposedly strong economy.^v

Legislating a living wage is the clearest path to addressing the cost of living for voters who are struggling economically, and voters across party lines agree.

- Polling from February 2024 showed that a majority (61%) of small business owners support raising the minimum wage in their state.^{vi}
- In 2022, two thirds (66%) of American workers said that inflation had outpaced any wage growth they experienced in the past year.^{vii}
- In 2021, Pew Research found that over six in ten adults (62%) favored raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, including 40% who were strongly in favor.^{viii}
 - Support spanned across all demographic groups and all parties.
 - Even among those who opposed the \$15 amount, seven in ten (71%) still wanted to see some sort of minimum wage increase.

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Over the course of the last several election cycles, in survey research spanning a range of states across the country with entirely different cultures and partisan makeups, Lake Research Partners has consistently found that voters decisively support raising the minimum wage.

Raising the wage is also an effective mobilizer – we have found that having a minimum wage measure on the ballot reliably produces an enthusiasm bump among Democratic voters, with no partisan backlash. Minimum wage measures are most popular among Democratic turnout targets, including young voters and people of color, who report higher levels of excitement to vote when raising the wage is on the ballot.

Voters are also more likely to vote for candidates who support raising the minimum wage. Democrats are far more likely, particularly turnout targets.

- May 2023 polling of likely voters in Idaho found majority support for a \$15 minimum wage by 2028 with tipped workers receiving the full minimum wage by 2030 (56%) *and* nearly as high support for an \$18 minimum wage by 2029 with tipped workers receiving the full minimum wage by 2031 (54%). Both proposals included annual cost of living increases.
 - Over four in ten voters said having a minimum wage increase on the ballot would make them more enthusiastic to vote (41%), including nearly two thirds of Democrats (64%).
 - The same number would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage (41%), including an overwhelming 85% of Democrats.
- March 2023 polling of likely voters in Arizona found majority support for a ballot measure that would raise the minimum wage by the cost of living every year, with additional \$1 gains in 2025 and 2026, and tipped workers receiving the full minimum wage by 2027 (59%).
 - Over a third of voters say that having a minimum wage increase on the ballot would make them more enthusiastic to vote (34%), including over six in ten Democrats (61%).
 - An even greater number would be more likely to vote for a candidate that supported raising the minimum wage (44%), including nearly nine in ten Democrats (87%).
- March 2022 polling of likely voters in Michigan found majority support for proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2027, with annual adjustments for inflation, and tipped workers receiving the full minimum wage within six years (56%).
 - Among Democratic surge voters (turnout targets), support for the proposal was 83%, with nearly two thirds strongly in support (62%). Among a sample of Black mothers who are Democratic turnout targets, support was 78%, with 63% strongly in support.
 - Over four in ten voters said having a minimum wage increase on the ballot would make them more enthusiastic to vote (41%). Among Democratic surge voters it is a majority (55%) and among Black mothers it is nearly two thirds (63%).
 - Over four in ten voters also said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage (42%). Among Democratic surge voters seven in ten are more likely to vote for such a candidate (70%) and among Black mothers it is nearly two thirds (64%).

- February 2022 polling of likely voters in Maine found majority support for a ballot measure that would raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2024, with annual cost of living adjustments, and tipped workers receiving annual \$1.50 increases until they reach the full minimum wage (54%).
 - Three in ten voters say that having a minimum wage increase on the ballot would make them more enthusiastic to vote (30%), including over four in ten Democrats (41%).

Contrary to restaurant industry attacks, Lake Research Partners has also consistently found very strong support for proposals to raise the tipped minimum wage among restaurant workers across a diverse set of states.

- April 2021 polling of restaurant workers in Delaware, Maine, and New Hampshire found restaurant workers across all three states overwhelmingly supported increasing the federal minimum wage for tipped workers to \$15 with tips on top. Four in five restaurant workers across the three states supported the proposal (80%) and half supported it strongly (50%).
 - Support was 75% in New Hampshire, 78% in Maine, and 85% in Delaware.
 - Across the three states, seven in ten restaurant workers said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage (70% overall; 72% in Delaware, 68% in Maine, & 69% in New Hampshire.)
- September 2021 polling of restaurant workers in the District of Columbia found near-unanimous support for a proposal to raise the minimum wage over several years for tipped workers to \$15 an hour with tips on top (88%) – a proposal that has since been enacted. Over half supported it strongly (54%).
 - Nearly eight in ten restaurant workers in DC said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage (79%).
- December 2019 polling of restaurant workers in New York State found over eight in ten workers supported a proposal to raise the minimum wage to tipped workers to the full minimum wage with tips on top (82%), with over half strongly in favor (58%).
 - Nearly two thirds of restaurant workers in New York said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage (68%).

Lake Research Partners polling on behalf of One Fair Wage can be found here: <https://onefairwage.site/research>

Please feel free to contact Celinda Lake (clake@lakeresearch.com) or David Mermin (dmermin@lakeresearch.com) at 202-776-9066 for additional information about this research.

ⁱ <https://circle.tufts.edu/2024-election-youth-poll#diverse-issue-priorities,-like-climate,-shape-youth-votes-and-action>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/large-latino-poll-finds-cost-of-living-and-economy-top-voters-concerns/ar-AA1kJc9x>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.americanfamilyvoices.org/post/a-strategy-for-factory-towns>

^{iv} <https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/black-voters-were-key-bidens-2020-win-money-woes-make-some-question-their-support-2024>

^v <https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/black-voters-were-key-bidens-2020-win-money-woes-make-some-question-their-support-2024>

^{vi} <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/02/22/a-majority-of-americas-business-owners-support-minimum-wage-increase.html>

^{vii} <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/27/two-thirds-of-american-workers-say-pay-not-keeping-up-with-inflation.html>

^{viii} <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/22/most-americans-support-a-15-federal-minimum-wage/>