



Hector P. Garcia M.D.  
2024 Morgan  
Corpus Christi, Texas

Dear GI. Forum Member:

I am writing to you in regard to recent legislation which I am sure you would want to know about. Bill Kilgarlin from Harris County has introduced a bill in the House which would establish a state minimum wage law of 50¢ an hour and which would cover all Texas workers, including agricultural workers.

As you know, the \$1.00 an hour Federal minimum wage law applies to interstate commerce or national defense contract industries only and specifically exempts agricultural and many other types of workers even where interstate commerce is involved. This accounts for the fact that, according to Republican Secretary of Labor Mitchell, at the present time at least 2½ million families in the U.S. make \$600 a year or less.

Apparently Texas has its fair share of such underpaid workers. The average rate paid vegetable crop workers in the Rio Grande Valley last year was 32¢ an hour. If they worked 60 hours a week for 35 weeks (which is about the pattern) that would be \$672 a year.

Agricultural workers are not the only ones in Texas making less than 50¢ an hour, either. Employees in many restaurants, hotels, and laundry and dry cleaning establishments; salespeople in five and dime and other such stores, and many other workers make well under 50¢ an hour, 35¢ - 40¢ an hour being quite common.

Of course, even though 50¢ an hour would raise the standard of living of these workers considerably, 50¢ an hour is a ridiculously low wage. But more important than the difference between 35¢ an hour and 50¢ an hour is the importance of establishing a state minimum wage law which will cover all types of employment. The trouble with the Federal minimum and with many of the state minimums (33 states have some sort of minimum wage law) is that so very many types of workers are excluded.

What is at issue here is a question of human dignity and the health and decency of many thousands of people. Communism and other totalitarian doctrines can only find roots where we fail to deal effectively with this issue. Unfortunately, opposition to the bill (H.B.410) is so strong that only a great many letters to the members of the committee it has been referred to, the House State Affairs Committee, will keep the bill from being killed in Committee. Richard Cory (House of Representatives, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas), Chairman of that Committee.

I hope you will take it upon yourself to write to your representative within the coming week to say that you strongly urge him to support the state minimum wage bill. And get as many other people to write also as you can. These letters do make a difference to many legislators. If you feel, as I do, that the bill should not be amended to exclude agricultural workers, you may want to mention that point also, since there is strong pressure to amend the bill to exclude them.

This is a very basic and a very just bill. Your help is urgently needed to send it on its way to becoming Texas law.

Sincerely yours,  
Hector P. Garcia M.D.