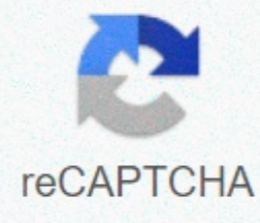




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The Industrial Revolution was both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing for the bank accounts of wealthy industrialists, but a curse on the poor and ignorant workers who enslaved themselves into dangerous factory work for hours inhumanly long and low pay. At the beginning of 19th-century Britain, it was not uncommon for an eight- or nine-year-old worker to work a 14-hour day and receive a brutal beating for delay or falling asleep in cars. All this for a dime an hour. Advertising It took almost a century for the cries of abused women, children and other workers to reach the ears of politicians. In 1890, Australia and New Zealand were the first countries to establish minimum wage laws. In 1909, Britain passed the Trade Boards Act, which included provisions to negotiate fair wages in many areas. In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt passed the minimum wage and worker rights legislation in 1938 as part of his New Deal reforms. These laws were the first to establish the basic working conditions that most modern workers took for granted: the eight-hour working day, overtime pay, the minimum age for work, and the minimum subsistence wage or minimum wage, as it is commonly called. A century after these early reforms, some critics argue that the minimum wage is still unfairly low. Others say that the minimum wage is actually responsible for economic problems such as inflation, high prices and even unemployment. Read on to learn more about who is eligible for the minimum wage, how different countries enforce minimum wage laws, and some of the arguments for and against the minimum wage. In the United States, the federal minimum wage is governed by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), first signed into law by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938. Roosevelt fought for years with a Supreme Court that repeatedly railed against a fixed minimum wage, arguing that it violated contractual freedom between employers and workers [source: Grossman]. It was only after Roosevelt's landslide victory in the 1936 election (523 electoral votes to 8) that the Supreme Court eventually relented, paving the way for the FLSA to pass. But the FLSA sets more than just the national minimum wage. It also regulates overtime pay, youth employment standards, and record-keeping provisions for all public and private sector jobs in America. Advertising The first federal minimum wage set by the FLSA was \$0.25 an hour in 1938. A year later, it came out at \$0.30 an hour. The minimum wage didn't reach \$1 until 1956 and \$2 until 1974. The last amendment to the FLSA set a minimum wage of \$6.55 an hour until July 24, 2009, when it will be raised to \$7.25 an hour. Any increase in the minimum wage requires congressional approval. The Federal Minimum Wage Act is enforced by the Labor Department's Wages and Hours Division (WHD). If the WHD WHD an infringement, will first try to resolve the situation by bringing the employer in accordance and making sure that illegal employees are paid any back wages. Repeated non-compliance with the FLSA can result in fines of up to \$10,000 or even jail time. Many states also have their own minimum wage laws. Currently, 27 states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages that exceed the federal standard. Washington state, for example, has the highest minimum wage, at \$8.55 an hour. Six states have set minimum wages below the federal level, with Kansas being the lowest at \$2.65 an hour. In all situations, employers have to pay their employees the highest of the two minimum wages, federal or state. More than 130 million workers in the United States are covered by the FLSA. In the next section, we will talk about the types of jobs that qualify for minimum wage protection. The minimum wage is a hot issue for politicians and economists. Every time an amendment is submitted to the U.S. Congress to raise the minimum wage, advocates and critics come up with some compelling arguments to win over the public. The most common argument in support of the minimum wage is that it protects workers at the lowest step of the socio-economic ladder. These workers, many of whom represent marginalised groups (women, minorities, youth workers, the disabled, etc.), simply do not have the bargaining power to fight for a minimum living wage without government intervention. Advertising Many advocates of the minimum wage argue that not only is the minimum wage necessary, but that it is too low. Here are some of the statistics they use to support an increase in the minimum wage: In the United States, the minimum wage is still 31% lower than the average hourly wage of a non-supervisor worker. When adjusting the minimum wage for inflation, the real value of today's rate is the lowest since 1952 [source: Institute of Economic Policy]. A full-time worker's annual salary (40 hours per week) is \$15,080 before taxes. Opponents of the minimum wage argue that a fixed minimum wage actually harms the same low-quality workers it promises to protect. The minimum wage, they say, is an artificial value imposed by the government on an individual worker. The real value of a worker should be decided in the open market. For example, if a young worker is applying for his first job as a driver in a factory, the factory owner knows that the worker will not produce as many widgets as a more experienced employee. For the factory owner, this employee will clearly bring less. Therefore, it deserves lower hourly pay. Opponents of the minimum wage argue that if the factory owner is forced to pay that young worker an artificially high minimum wage, then he will choose not to hire the worker, because it will make no financial sense. So, in this this instead of working for a wage below the minimum wage until he gets more experience, the young worker is now unemployed [source: Kibbe]. Economists on both sides of the issue resist study after study showing that the minimum wage contributes or not to rising unemployment, so that the issue remains unresolved. Another argument against the minimum wage is that it contributes to inflation. Here's how it works: If a manufacturer is suddenly forced to pay its workers \$7.25 an hour instead of \$6.55 per hour, it needs to increase the price of its product to recover costs. This is called cost-driven inflation, and some economists believe that raising the minimum wage is one of the worst culprits. Other critics say that so-called full-time minimum wage workers don't actually exist. Instead, they argue, most minimum-wage workers provide a second or third source of income to a family, and it's often middle-class children who work in the summer. According to U.S. Census statistics, the average annual salary of a family with a minimum wage worker was \$43,000 in 2006 [source: Blake]. Some minimum wage reformers say that tax rebates for low-income workers are far more effective than minimum wage laws. The logic is that, under current minimum wage laws, the only person who bears the financial burden to fight poverty is the owner of the company that has to pay its workers the minimum wage [source: Landsburg]. If low-wage workers are supported through tax cuts and rebates, all taxpayers can share the financial burden. For more information on inflation, interest rates and other important economic principles, follow these links. Related HowStuffWorks Articles Sources Blake, Whitney. The mythology of the minimum wage. The weekly standard. August 16, 2006. (May 7, 2009) Institute of Economic Policy. Hundreds of economists say: Raise the minimum wage. (2 May 2009) European Commission. Germany: working conditions. (May 2, 2009) Jonathan. Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938: Maximum fight for a minimum wage. U.S. Department of Labor. (May 2, 2009) Frank; Michael Sauga; Stefan Simons. In the debate on the minimum wage, Germany should look abroad. Der Spiegel. January 25, 2008. (May 7) Matthew B. The Minimum Wage: Washington's Perennial Myth. CATO Institute. 23 May 1988. (May 2, 2009) Steven E. The sin of wages. Slate. July 9, 2004. (May 2, 2009) . Census Bureau. Poverty thresholds for 2008 by family size and number of related children under 18. February 2, 2009. 2009. 13, 2009) . Department of Labor. Information sheet #2: Restaurants and fast food under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). (May 2, 2009) and Hour Division. Compliance Assistance: Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). (May 2, 2009) Chris. Winston Churchill: A biographical companion. ABC-CLIO. 2002. (May 2, 2009) &sig=w_deiod908kiTab1-hrVrlaoDZc&hl=en&ei=YUQASq-0HpThtgfi462KBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10Xinhua News Agency. Minimum wage system set up. July 26, 2004. (May 2, 2009) Moming. China raises the minimum wage to calm consumers. Marketwatch. February 27, 2008. (May 2, 2009) The federal minimum wage is currently set at \$7.25 per hour. However, many states and local communities have higher minimum hourly rates for workers. In fact, 22 states raised their minimum wage rules in early 2019, surpassing the 2018 total of 18. Minimum wage 2019 To keep up with the rules in terms of staffing, here's a roundup of where each state is currently. Alabama Alabama doesn't have a state minimum wage. So companies here have to pay the federal fee of \$7.25 per hour. Alaska Ast early 2019, Alaska raised its state minimum wage from \$9.84 to \$9.89. The state has a law that states that the minimum wage must be adjusted for inflation each year and stay at least \$1 on the federal rate. Arizona Arizona also just raised the minimum wage on January 1. It went from \$10.50 to \$11 per hour. Arkansas Arkansas raised its minimum wage from \$8.50 to \$9.25 an hour earlier this year. And other increases are also in the works, with the minimum wage expected to end at \$11 by 2021. California For California businesses with more than 25 employees, the minimum wage is rising from \$11 to \$12 an hour. For companies in the state with 25 or fewer employees, the rate is rising from \$10.50 to \$11. Colorado The minimum wage is rising from \$10.20 to \$11.10 an hour in Colorado. Connecticut This has been recent proposals to raise Connecticut's minimum wage, but nothing has yet passed. It is currently at \$10.10 per hour. Delaware Delaware's minimum wage increased from \$8.25 to \$8.75 an hour on January 1. And it is expected to rise again on October 1, this time to \$9.25. District of Columbia In Washington, D.C., the minimum currently stands at \$13.25 per hour. It has risen from \$12.50 2018. Il Florida Florida's minimum wage is set to adjust for inflation. It grew to \$8.46 from \$8.25 in minimum wage is actually only \$5.15 an hour. Of course, the \$7.25 federal minimum wage still applies to most jobs. But those who are not covered by the Fair

Labor Standards Act can pay the lowest rate. HawaiiHawaii's minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour is not expected to rise so far in 2019.Idahoidaho does not have a fixed minimum wage apart from the federally set hourly rate of \$7.25. IllinoisThe state minimum wage in Illinois is currently \$8.25 per hour, with no increases expected for 2019. However, Cook County and Chicago both have higher rates, at \$11 and \$12 respectively. Indiana There are currently several proposals in Indiana to raise the minimum wage, but nothing that passed in early January. The current rate is consistent with lowalowa's federal minimum wage 7.25. Il rate is also consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. KansasKansas' minimum wage is also consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. KentuckyKentucky's minimum wage is also consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour. Louisiana Louisiana doesn't actually have a state minimum wage. So workers covered by the FLSA are subject to the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. MaineMaine raised its minimum wage on January 1 this year, from \$10 to \$11 an hour. MarylandMaryland's minimum wage is currently \$10.10. It increased from \$9.25 in 2018.MassachusettsMassachusetts raised its minimum wage from \$11 to \$12 earlier this year. And incremental increases are scheduled for the next four years, eventually increasing the rate to \$15 per hour. MichiganMichigan's minimum wage is currently \$9.25. It is set to increase to \$9.45 in March this year. MinnesotaFor companies that employ 50 workers or more, the minimum wage in Minnesota is \$9.86 per hour. The rate is \$8.01 for smaller employers. MississippiMississippi is another state without an official minimum, so the federal rate of \$7.25 applies. MissouriMissouri's minimum wage for 2019 is \$8.60 per hour, up from \$7.85 in 2018.MontanaMontana raised its minimum wage to \$8.50 per hour from \$8.30 on January 1 this year. NebraskaNebraska's current minimum wage is \$9 an hour. NevadaNevada's minimum wage is \$7.25 for employees earning qualified health benefits and \$8.25 for those who aren't. New HampshireThe new Hampshire minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25.New Jersey New Jersey raised its minimum wage to \$8.85 an hour from \$8.60 on January 1. New MexicoThe minimum wage in New Mexico is currently set at \$7.50 per hour. New YorkThe state minimum wage in New York is \$11.10 as of December 31 And it is expected to rise to \$11.80 at the end of this year. The rate is highest in New York City, Long Island and Westchester.North Carolina North Carolina's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. To the north north Dakota's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour. OhioOhio raised its minimum wage on January 1, from \$8.30 to \$8.55 per hour. Oklahoma Oklahoma's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. OregonOregon's minimum wage is currently \$10.75 per hour. It increased at that rate 2018. Il Pennsylvania's minimum wagePennsylvania is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour. Rhode IslandRhode Island's minimum wage increased from \$10.10 to \$10.50 per hour on January 1. South Carolina The South Carolina minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour. South DakotaSouth Dakota the minimum wage increased from \$8.85 to \$9.10 per hour on January 1. TennesseeTennessee does not have a specified state minimum wage. So it's consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour. TexasTexas' minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. UtahUtah's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. VermontVermont's minimum wage is indexed to inflation. So it increased to \$10.78 from \$10.50 per hour on January 1. VirginiaVirginia's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. WashingtonWashington's minimum wage increased from \$11.50 to \$12 an hour on January 1. And it is expected to rise again in 2020 to \$13.50. Il West Virginia Minimum Wage It is currently set at \$8.75.WisconsinWisconsin's minimum wage is consistent with the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. WyomingWyoming's minimum wage is currently set at \$5.15 per hour for employees who are not covered by FLSA. Most businesses must meet the federal rate of \$7.25.Picture: Shutterstock Shutterstock

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