

TESTIMONY: SB 934

May 21, 2014

Randy Block, Director
Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network

I am grateful to the House Government Operations Committee for providing an opportunity to offer public on the Senate's substitute bill for SB 934. My testimony draws from my experience as a religious leader and as the Director of the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network, a statewide network of Unitarian Universalist activists from 27 UU congregations. My Unitarian Universalist denomination affirms that it is a moral imperative that the minimum wage be increased. MUUSJN supports a raise in the minimum wage to \$10.10/hour for both regular and tipped workers and believes that including a cost of living allowance is just and fair.

These are my comments about the Senate substitute bill for SB 934:

1. SB 934, as adopted in the Senate, would raise the minimum wage to \$9.20/hour, but does not go far enough to raise families out of poverty. A family of three would still be living under poverty at this wage rate. Under this bill, tipped workers' sub-minimum wages would increase to only \$3.50/hour.
2. A recent poll indicates that 65% of Michigan likely voters would support a minimum wage of \$10.10/hour, a rate that does lift workers out of poverty.
3. Under the proposal, taxpayers would still be subsidizing corporations that refuse to pay their employees a decent wage. For example, a family of three under the poverty level would be eligible for Food Stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).
4. My organization has involved people of faith from 13 congregations in the Raise Michigan campaign. So far, we have collected over 4,500 signatures and are part of a much larger effort that has now collected more than the required number of signatures to put a \$10.10/hour minimum wage on the ballot this fall.
5. We are deeply troubled that SB 934 seeks to derail the right of citizens to vote on an issue that affects 1 million Michigan residents. Attempting to stop the ballot campaign by repealing Michigan's minimum wage law is a dirty trick that attempts to circumvent Michigan law that requires the Legislature to either approve a citizen initiative with enough valid signatures or sent it to the public for a vote.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Michigan Senators are strongly urged to oppose SB 934. Allow Michigan citizens the right to vote on the Raise Michigan minimum wage ballot initiative. It's the moral thing to do for hard working Michiganders. It's the right thing to do for our democracy. For more information, contact Randy Block, Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network (MUUSJN) at 248-549-5170.