

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Minimum Wage: Civil Mandate

The idea of wages has been around since before currency existed. People would trade labor for food, lodging, gold or silver (before there were coins), or something else of value. Abraham had servants who did labor for him but these servants did not work for free. Servants were people who did not have flocks, herds, or fields of their own but needed to eat and have a place to live. So, Abraham traded food and shelter for their labors. The question of this treatise is “what, if any, role does scripture assign to government in the setting and paying of wages?”

As with all things, God’s Word speaks to the concept of minimum wage. Successful governing requires an understanding of its application. As Creator and Sovereign Ruler over all the earth, God alone defines the purpose of mankind and all of His institutions. When examining minimum wage, therefore, we must find what God’s word has to say about the role of government, the purpose of God’s law, and righteous dealings concerning wages.

### The Role of government

The duty of the civil Government is to ensure the free exercise of biblically-defined personal liberties, promote the general welfare, provide for the common defense, pay civil debt and establish contractual laws through legislative, executive and judicial bodies. Keeping in mind that the primary role of the government is to maintain law and order and restrain evil deeds (Ro 13:4) will be vital to correctly applying God’s Word to wage law. God’s purpose will also inform us what means are and are not available to the civil government in order to fulfill its mandate.

Government’s proper use of its God-given authority means that it will exercise that authority to provide equal justice and equal protection for all. Just as God expresses his authority through His law, the government is granted the right to express its authority through laws. God’s intent for government is to create laws that protect the life and property of the individual, allow for mediation if transgression occurs, and determine and enforce restitution and or punishment.

In order to stay within the bounds dictated by God’s law, government must take care to avoid making laws that result in plunder. The term plunder means the violent and dishonest acquisition of property (real or personal) and thus it is a violation of God’s law against stealing (Ex. 10:15). While it is obvious when an individual commits acts of plunder, often, the acts of plunder committed by the government are not as clear. That is why we must judge what the government does based on God’s intent for government.

The use of authority and force by the government is legitimate. However, using the government’s God-given authority beyond its God-given purpose is a major breach of God’s law. This applies to attempts by the government to equalize the conditions of life, whether they are social or economic. These attempts are rightly called plunder because there is no way for the government to give to the “poor” without using the force of its authority to take from the “rich”. Social engineering, which includes concepts like affirmative action, so called social justice, and the minimum wage are exactly that and are therefore verboten.

Plunder can also take place when the government sides with one party in opposition to the other. Laws that reinforce the position of the employee result in plunder against the

employer and visa versa. When government leagues with any organization in order to support their interests, plunder is the result (Lev. 19:15). All of these actions are outside what God's law allows.

What government must do is create laws that support God's law. God's law says "Thou shalt not steal" thus the government is responsible to create laws against any form of stealing. The government is also responsible to enforce those laws and create a system of punishment and restitution that mirrors God's own. This is not a suggestion but God's mandate to the Civil realm.

The primary role of law is to set up a system to punish the evil doer, meaning evil has been done and there are witnesses of it. However, in situations where physical life is endangered, the government is responsible to safeguard preemptively (Deut.22:8). That means laws can be made that enforce safety regulations. And, the government has the right to "quarantine" a business that does not comply. Most laws, however, are not of this nature. The majority of laws must be post facto. This is one reason the minimum wage law does not meet God's standard.

### **The Purpose of God's Law**

The scriptures are replete with instructions how to righteously deal with your neighbor. In the New Testament Jesus makes it clear how the term neighbor ought to be interpreted. It is not a term limited to those who dwell near you or in your specific community. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us the far reaching intent of God's law to love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:25-37).

The most basic principles of God's Word apply to how you treat everyone with whom you deal. In other words, "Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's wife" means you are not to covet anyone's wife. This broad application of God's law reveals that His intent in giving His law is righteousness and not control. Because God is looking for righteousness in all of man's interactions, His law was designed to be applied in this broad manner. Jesus applied it to the heart of the issue when he said to be angry without a cause is murder. Because of this nature of God's law, we are able to apply it to topics that were not specifically present during the writing of His Word, such as the minimum wage law.

In order to discover the proper application of God's law to our topic, we will draw from several scriptures which reveal God's intent when it comes to the minimum wage. Some of these scriptures speak directly of wages and others of more general principles of righteousness. In either case, there is sufficient evidence from which we can conclude how the purpose of God's law dictates the existence and scope of any minimum wage law.

Abraham had household servants who exchanged their labor for food and shelter. But, obviously, wages also come into play when others, who are not household servants, are hired to do labor. Food and lodging might be the employee's wages; but in cases where the person is not a servant in particular, it is likely gold, silver or other valuable things would be used to pay the worker for his labor. Both parties benefit in these arrangements. Both parties get something of value. This does not occur because man is generally good and wants to benefit his brother. It is God's law that mandates love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

To understand the importance of valuing both the employee and the employer we have to understand something about labor or, if you prefer, work. Work is not something God used to punish mankind for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Work is innate to the Dominion Mandate (Gen.1:28). God took special care to reveal to us how He worked six

days and then rested on the seventh. And, He did this at the very beginning of history which highlights its significance. He was very clear man's purpose in regards to his relationship with the earth. Mankind was created first to have relationship with God and others then secondly to work in the earth. Thus, the manner in which work is done is also contained within God's law (Col. 3:23).

Scripture addresses how to carry out these exchanges for labor in a righteous manner. This is more evidence that God sees value in every individual's labor. In fact, God puts such a value on man's labors that his law forbids fraud and deceptive or oppressive practices in the exchange made for his labors. As with every matter, submitting to God's law in labor trade causes there to be a balance between the needs of both parties.

The context in which God intends for these exchanges to take place is the same as in God's dealings with mankind. God made covenant with mankind. In that covenant God brings his protection and provision but not without an exchange. In other words, our relationship with God is not strictly mental and emotional. Relationship with God includes an aspect of working with and for him. Indeed, we are servants of the Most High God. We bring our worship and devotion but we also bring our labor, both through the tithe and through our work for Him. His law is intrinsic to God's covenant. It not only defines but governs the covenant as well.

As with all of our dealings with one another, the covenants made between individuals ought to be a reflection of God's covenant with man (Mt. 20:2). The details of the responsibilities, rights and privileges of both parties should be based in God's principles. God's law and covenant is the pattern and the context for all contracts. This includes the manner of the exchange of labor for wages. Since our covenants are to be a reflection of our covenant with God, they are holy. And, things that are holy must be viewed and treated properly. Both parties must respect one another and what the other party brings to the relationship.

God offers covenant to man but man is free to accept or reject that covenant. Of course, with God there are some pretty major consequences from rejecting the covenant that are not present in man's contacts. Each man is free to either covenant with God or not covenant with God. Each man is free to benefit from the covenant or not benefit from the covenant as he chooses. The same is true of the work relationship. Each employee is free contract with an employer according to whatever agreement the two can reach. Under God's law, the only place the government has in this arrangement is when there is an accusation of breach, fraud, deception, etc. The government can then step in to ensure that the contract was kept righteously and according to the agreement.

The beauty of this concept is that the interactions of mankind mirror those of God. By following God's pattern, the blessings of his wisdom are obtained. In addition, this sort of interaction is much more interpersonal and beneficial, not only for the individual but for society as a whole. The making and keeping of covenants causes society to grow and mature.

When the government steps in to create a bunch of wage laws that are preventative in nature in it is an attempt to mold society, there are no such benefit as growth and maturity. It is a breach of God's purpose for government. God does not intend for government to become the ruler of man and all of his choices. To do so is an infringement upon God's right as Sovereign King (Ex. 20:3). In their attempt to be God, the government fails miserably at reflecting Him.

A government that overreaches God's purpose and law proves they are not concerned about righteousness, which is the goal of God's law, but rather about control. This infringement upon God's rights is inevitably an infringement upon man's rights due to the nature of covenant itself. Within the confines of His covenant with mankind, man is given the right to rule his own

life, under the headship of God. To introduce “mid-level” management through lawless government strips man of his personal headship. When this occurs, government becomes nothing more than the tool of evil men to gain more power and wealth. According to God’s law, this will not go unpunished.

A work environment shrouded in plunder-based laws is a hostile one in comparison to God’s ordained pattern of covenant keeping. When a freely made covenant is kept by both parties, trust, hope, and fraternity (a relationship built on brotherly love and mutual support -- PS 133:1), is born. This is the heart of what God wants in our business, and it is an incubator for loving your neighbor as yourself. Freely made covenants are the exact conditions the civil realm is mandated to protect, even from itself.

### **Righteous Dealings Concerning Wages**

The laws of the land ought to support free will contracts and enforce the details of the agreements made between the parties involved. The laws should also provide for an appropriate penalty and restitution for breach of contract. The government has no ability to create fraternity through laws. It can only encourage fraternity by the just application of punishment and restitution in the presence of a breach. While our weak natures might tempt us to break a covenant, the knowledge that the government will enforce the consequences of the breach can encourage us to resist that temptation.

The conditions under which the government may and must intervene are fairly clear. Scripture forbids the breach of contract, the use of fraud, deception (2 Corinthians 4:1-2), oppression (Leviticus 19:13-14), theft or in any manner taking advantage of the other party’s weakness (Leviticus 25:14-17, Psalm 82, 2 Cor. 7:2). If any witness reports these offenses, the government must investigate and make a determination concerning guilt.

If guilt is found, the government has the power to punish the guilty party and enforce restitution. They may not, however, introduce means or measures that are contrary to God’s principles. Breaches must be defined by God’s law and not by government’s motivation. Likewise, punishment and restitutions must find their origins within the Word. Mercy is in the hands of the offended (Luke 6:36) not the government. Nor may the government exceed God’s law with regards to wrath. Put simply, “the punishment must fit the crime”. However, it is God’s principles, not the civil realm’s opinions, which make that determination.

Wage law is one of those types of law that cannot be preventative. The examples above are punitive in nature and only come into play after the fact. Once evil has entered into the situation, then the government can come in, judge, sanction and punish. If evil is found to be in play during contract negotiations government can step in, but only after an accusation of evil has been made. There is no case without a witness and there is no witness without action. Thus, the government cannot come in preemptively and require certain actions or terms within the contract.

In order to ensure that the government can be informed of breaches, laws must be in place to protect the witness. If an individual fears retaliation, he is less likely to raise his voice against oppressive or deceitful practices in negotiations. The whistleblower, as current vernacular would have it, must be protected from threats to his person and property if we are to have righteous contracting and wages in our land.

The government has no authority to set a minimum wage. They have no right to monitor negotiations. Nor can they insert their own view of what ought to be in the contract. This

specifically includes unemployment insurance and future medical insurance in the form of Medicare tax. They cannot require or provide for the training or equipping of the work force. Nor can they take any action that serves to incentivize or disincentivize any party involved in the contracting negotiations.

All interference beyond what the Word has defined works to diminish God, man and society. A diminished society becomes vulnerable to attack from without and from within. Men must resist such violations of God's law if the social order is to experience righteousness rather than unrighteous control. While true righteousness must first be born within the heart of man through salvation (2 Cor. 5:21), the product of righteous men ruling in a righteous manner is a strong, prosperous, righteous society. Then, lawbreakers are punished, restitution restores what has been taken to the offended, and righteousness flourishes. This social by-product is not because every individual is righteous, but because those who rule do so righteously.

Wage law was not the government's first transgression against God's law, nor was it the last. As the principles of contracting were abandoned, the door was opened to further offenses. Lust for control now runs rampant in the government because the first step outside the boundaries of God's law was taken without challenge.

Since the creation of free will contracts is biblically under the headship of the individual, government may only step in to address breach of contract or when contracts involve fraud or taking advantage of the weaker individual. Just as an individual, the government is bound by God's law. What He has commanded, the government must perform. Everything else is forbidden.

## **In Conclusion**

We are currently so far from God's patterns concerning just wages that it will take time to correct all of the problems. However, we must start with repentance. We must repent of our government's breach of God's headship, law and principles. We must repent of the government's breach of man's headship and plunder. We must repent over the fact that we have allowed the government to rule in this unrighteous manner. Then we must proclaim the truth to our government so that real change can begin. And, as righteous men begin to rule in our government, the laws of our land will be brought into right alignment with God's law resulting in more righteous society. We will then see "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1).

This Position Paper was written by Karen Woolard