



Advocacy Update

Sent July 31, 2013

Comprehensive Sex Education

Earlier this month, a [new study](#) was released that confirmed what many have known to be true for some time now: comprehensive sexuality education for high school students really works. This study was focused on California, where in 1991, there were 70.9 births for every 1,000 teens aged 15-19. In 2011, this number went down to 28 births for 1,000 teens, with the drop attributed to expanded sex education programs.

California's progress matches a national trend in decreasing teen birth rates. Interestingly, the highest rates of teen births are still concentrated in the South – [often in states](#) that do not offer comprehensive sex ed programs. This correlation extends beyond pregnancy – Southern states without comprehensive sexuality education also have the [highest rates of STDs](#). The numbers are clear: we have the means to diminish teen pregnancy through proper sexuality education and birth control instruction. Unfortunately, this information is not always shared with students: nationally, [one in four teens](#) have received abstinence-only education, with no instruction on birth control.

WRJ has been a proud and longtime supporter of broad and holistic education for our country's youth through [resolutions](#) and policy actions: WRJ signed on to an important letter earlier this year asking Congress to protect funding for comprehensive sex education programs even as cuts from sequestration went into place. You can add your voice by [telling Congress](#) that you support federally funded comprehensive sex education that would provide young people with the knowledge they need to make informed, responsible and healthy decisions. You can also help by facilitating educational programs for youth in your congregation that teach medically accurate information through a lens of Jewish morals and values.

Raise the Minimum Wage!

Last week marked four years since the U.S. federal minimum wage was last raised. It is currently only \$7.25/hour, which is \$15,000 a year—less than the poverty level for a family of four. Minimum wage for tipped workers—just \$2.13 an hour—hasn't been raised in two decades. These numbers simply do not match the realities facing workers in our country today. If the federal minimum wage had kept up with inflation over the past 40 years, it would be [over \\$10.50/hour](#) today. If the minimum wage had kept pace with the rise of worker productivity, it would have reached over \$21.00 an hour.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act has been introduced in both the House and Senate. It does exactly what its name suggests—raises the minimum wage to a just level. It would gradually raise the wage to \$10.10 per hour, nearly what the minimum wage would be if adjusted for inflation. In addition, it would index the minimum wage to the cost of living, so in the future the minimum wage will automatically keep up with inflation without awaiting Congressional action.

WRJ has [strong and urgent policy](#) calling for legislation that would increase the minimum wage. Your Members of Congress need to know you support this common sense raise. [Tell your elected officials it's time to raise the wage](#). If you're an employer, make sure you are paying an appropriate living wage to your employees. You can also talk to your congregations and make sure that your synagogue's pay scale is in line with financial realities in your community.

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