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**SANDERS TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS ON NEED TO RAISE MINIMUM WAGE**

Rep. Bernard Sanders announced today that he will be holding a series of public hearings around Vermont on the need to raise the federal minimum wage. Sanders is introducing legislation this week in the U.S. House of Representatives to raise the minimum wage to \$5.50 per hour.

Sanders said the purpose of the public hearings would be to gather testimony and information from Vermonters about how a low minimum wage affects their lives and impacts on the Vermont economy. He said the current minimum wage fails to provide American workers with enough money to escape from poverty.

"It makes no sense for workers to spend 40 hours a week on a job, often without benefits, and find themselves poorer than when they began the work week," Sanders said. "The current minimum wage is not a minimum wage, it is a poverty wage. I intend to lead the effort in the Congress to fight for a living wage".

Sanders said that if the minimum wage had been indexed to inflation since 1970, it would now stand at \$5.78 -- over \$1.50 more per hour than the current minimum wage of \$4.25.

"A fair minimum wage would mean at least \$200 a month more for minimum wage workers to pay their rent, feed their families and buy clothes," he said. "American workers, whose productivity is increasing faster than that of workers in any nation on earth, deserve to be able to bring home enough income each week to provide for their families without working an 80-hour work week."

Sanders also noted that, in his view, increasing the minimum wage would also benefit the Vermont economy. "The extra \$200 that would be in the pockets of minimum wage workers would not only allow them to live in dignity, but it would also be spent in Vermont communities, boosting the local economy. Raising the minimum wage is good economic sense for Vermonters and for Vermont's economy."

Sanders said he plans hearings in the spring in St. Albans, Brattleboro, Rutland, the Burlington area and the Northeast Kingdom.

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