# FRAMING: ANALYZING EXTREMES

**PRACTICE #1**

*Version A: The government should not control handguns.
The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans the right to own guns. There are many violent people in the world and we need to be able to protect ourselves. If handguns were outlawed, only outlaws will have guns. The government should not interfere with our ability to protect ourselves.

*Version B: The government should control handguns.
A handgun is a machine designed to kill people, and we would be better off without them. People who live in homes where there are handguns are more likely to commit suicide or to be murdered than other people. Guns kept in homes are more likely to kill a family member or friend than an intruder.

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**PRACTICE #2**

*Version A: The U.S. should not use the death penalty.
Life is sacred. The death penalty is cruel and barbaric punishment. Two wrongs don't make a right, and meeting violence with violence is not the answer. It would be horrible to execute an innocent person, and we all know that human beings make mistakes. If our society needs to remove a dangerous person, we should use life imprisonment.

*Version B: The U.S. should use the death penalty.
A person who commits a violent crime must pay for it. If criminals know they might be executed, they will think twice before killing someone. Why should taxpayers pay for life imprisonment for people who commit horrible crimes? Our legal system is fair enough to decide if people are guilty or innocent. If you kill, you should lose your life.

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**PRACTICE #3**

**Version A: Family Of Abuse Suspect Has Dozens On Public Aid.
At today's news briefing about welfare reform, Welfare Commissioner Joseph Gallant referred to the case of Clarabel Ventura as a prime example of what's wrong with the current system. Ventura, a single mother of six and long-time welfare recipient, has been accused of scalding her four-year-old son and leaving his burns untreated for weeks. Ventura has a history of drug addiction. Her children have been removed multiple times for abuse and neglect. Gallant said the Ventura family is indicative of the generational dependency and illegitimacy fostered by the current system. Clarabel's mother raised 17 children on welfare, 14 of whom are now raising children on welfare. At the age of 27, Ventura has six children by four different fathers. Gallant called for stricter measures such as time limits, cut-offs for women who have more children while on welfare, and fingerprinting of all public assistance recipients.

**Version B: Activists Accuse Commissioner of Stereotyping Welfare Moms.
At today's news briefing about welfare reform, the Governor's Welfare Commissioner Joseph Gallant referred to Clarabel Ventura as "the textbook case for welfare reform." Ventura, a single mother of six who receives welfare benefits, has been accused of scalding her four-year-old son and leaving his burns untreated for weeks. When pressed by reporters, Gallant acknowledged that Ventura's case is not typical. However, Gallant has distributed stories about the Ventura case to State lawmakers, along with a "Dear Colleague" letter urging them to support reforms such as time limits, and fingerprinting of all AFDC and food stamp recipients. A group of about 20 protested outside the state House during Gallant's briefing. Welfare activist Sue Wilson criticized Gallant, saying he keeps referring to the tragic case of Clarabel Ventura "as if she represented all mothers on welfare." Wilson added, "Gallant knows that AFDC moms have, on average, two children." Protesters held placards that called for the state to "Fix the economy, not poor moms."

*Adapted from Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook. New England Literacy Resource Center. 1999.
**Stories from "Battered in the Media Mainstream News Coverage of Welfare Reform." Radical America. July 1996.

# LEADERS SAY LIVING WAGE WON'T HELP BUSINESS OR EMPLOYEES PROSPER

By Alan J. Liddle

Efforts to boost the minimum wage have worried many individual restauranteurs and trade associations for a long time, but those concerns are out of touch with the times, a panel of foodservice executives and lobbyists suggested during the recent Multi-Unit Food Service Operators conference here.

"There isn't a minimum-wage debate anymore; it's about the 'living wage,'" foodservice consultant and lobbyist Rick Berman of the Employment Policies Institute of Washington, D.C., declared.

"What we're talking about [today] is paying people based on their need" and not on their "skills" or "contributions" to an enterprise, Berman said. Such thinking, he added, represents "a welfare mentality."

Berman's remarks came during a MUESO general session called "Get Ready to Rumble: Living Wage Versus Minimum Wage Debate," moderated by Nation's Restaurant News' national reports editor Milford Prewitt. Also on the panel were Jeff King, chairman of Long Beach, Calif., 12-unit dinner-house operator of King's Seafood; Bill McCarten, chairman of contractor HMS Host Corp. of Bethesda, Md.; and Jackie Trujillo, chairwoman of KFC franchisee Harman Management Corp. of Los Altos, Calif.

As it turned out, no debate occurred, as all of the panelists seemed to share a desire for the government to take a hands-off approach when it comes to setting wages and benefits. Panel members maintained that the enactment of a minimum-wage increase has an inflationary impact on a business' entire payroll structure.

During Prewitt's introduction of the topic, he made this comment: "Some economists say that in the midst of the most prosperous period in our nation's history, the number of people in poverty in the U.S. has fundamentally not changed."

Advocates of the so-called living wage, including organized labor and church groups, in recent years have succeeded in convincing elected officials in dozens of cities nationwide to set pay rates calculated to help entry-level employees afford housing and medical benefits in the communities where they work.

Some of the compensation packages tied to city or county "living wage" policies include cash compensation ranging from $9 to $15 an hour and health benefits, Berman said. The first living-wage proposal passed in 1996, he said. Today 50 are in place and another "80 are in play."
Until recently, living-wage policies applied only to people working for government agencies or private companies that have government contracts or that operate on publicly owned land, such as waterfront developments owned by port authorities. However, the city council in Santa Monica, Calif., is leaning toward adoption of a living-wage proposal affecting all businesses in a special zone.

Excerpted from article printed in Oct 16, 2000 Nation's Restaurant News

# SANTA MONICA: FIGHTING FOR A LIVING WAGE

## WORKERS AND TAXPAYERS VERSUS LOW-WAGE EMPLOYERS

By Vivian Rothstein and Madeline Janis-Aparicio

If you work a full-time job, you should earn a living wage -- enough to support you and your dependents without public assistance. That's the central principle of the living wage movement, and it will be tested this November in Santa Monica, Calif.

The living wage movement began in Baltimore eight years ago and has now spread across the country. It's had its ups and downs, but 2002 has been a particularly good year for living wage advocates. In New Orleans, voters approved the nation's first citywide living wage measure despite strong opposition from business leaders. Voters in Oakland, Calif., passed a living wage measure, making it the first municipality in the state to mandate higher wages via the ballot box. And in a surprise turn, conservative economist David Neumark, a long-time critic of both living wages and minimum wages, concluded in a major study that living wage laws are an effective way to reduce poverty.

Here in Santa Monica, all of these developments were unwelcome news to the tourism industry, which is fighting a relentless battle to maintain the status quo of low wages and high profits in this popular coastal resort town. The chief executives of luxury beachfront hotels such as Loews and Casa del Mar -- which have spearheaded the industry's $2 million anti-living wage fight -- were no doubt hoping that voters in New Orleans and Oakland would renounce the living wage, and that Neumark would offer them some academic ammunition for their war on the poor. Instead, Neumark confirmed what's already known by people in New Orleans, Oakland and the 80 other cities and counties that have passed living wage laws: higher pay leads to less poverty.

The final showdown in Santa Monica comes November 5, when voters will decide the fate of a groundbreaking living wage ordinance approved last year by the City Council. That law, if upheld at the polls, will raise the pay of some 2,000 tourism workers to $10.50 an hour -- the amount at which an individual supporting a family of four no longer qualifies for food stamps.

Santa Monica's fight represents a significant expansion of the living wage concept, so advocates and opponents around the country are watching it closely. So far, most living wage measures have applied only to businesses that have a formal relationship with municipal government -- city contractors, lessees or financial aid recipients. In other words, businesses that receive government funds are required to pay a living wage. But the Santa Monica law is among the first to broaden the scope of living wage legislation. It covers not only city contractors, but also some 40 large businesses in the city's Coastal Zone -- a booming tourist destination where workers often toil for poverty wages in luxury hotels, chain retail outlets and high-end restaurants.

What's wrong with this picture? Despite the phenomenal growth of the tourism industry made possible by public investment, there has been no trickle-down effect for service-sector workers in the Coastal Zone. In fact, a study commissioned by the city in 2000 found that thousands of Santa Monica tourism zone workers live in conditions of poverty or near poverty. These workers are integral to the success of Santa Monica's revival, yet while they work full time, most still qualify for some form of government-funded anti-poverty assistance.

Excerpted from article found February 22, 2003 on the website Tompaine.com, a public interest journal

# THE GROWING ECONOMIC DIVIDE

Economists and analysts whose business it is to monitor and explain economic health and progress, spent the months before the onset of the recession brought on by the events of September 11 examining the widening gap between the earnings of the wealthiest wage earners and the lowest wage earners.

They found that:

- Over the past decade income inequality has increased in North Carolina;
- In the late 1980's, the richest 20 percent of families had average incomes 8.4 times as large as the poorest 20 percent; by the late 1990's that ratio had increased to 10.0; and
- Between the late 1980's and the late 1990's, the average income of the poorest fifth of families increased by only $300 (from $12,810 to $13,110) while the average income of the richest fifth of families increased by $24,450 (from $107,150 to $131,600).

# FEDERAL POVERTY LINE

The federal poverty line (FPL) is the official measuring stick of family economic well-being. Most researchers, however, agree that poverty level income is not sufficient to provide for the basic needs of most working families.

The FPL, based on the cost of an "economic food plan", was calculated during the 1960s War on Poverty. Using 1950s' data, the Department of Agriculture, came up with an estimate of the minimum nutritional requirements for a family in monetary terms. This number is then multiplied by three to allow for shelter and other expenses.

The calculation however makes a few questionable assumptions:

1. That families have access to food at the cheapest prices possible;
2. That a healthy family can live off the minimum nutritional requirements for a long period of time; and
3. That families spend one-third of their total budgets on food.

The last assumption fuels the prevailing argument against the FPL as a measure of family well-being. In our times, the portion of the family budget expected to be expended on food is one-fifth or one-sixth, so a more accurate poverty level would multiply the basic food cost by five or six instead of three. Using the most common family type calculation (for a family of four), the recalculated poverty line derived by multiplying the basic food cost by five yields an annual income of $29,416.

# MINIMUM WAGE

The decline in the value of the minimum wage is the driving force behind the living wage movement. Even with the 1996 increase to $5.15 an hour, the buying power of the current minimum wage is thirty cents below the 1968 peak. Inflation has increased so much more rapidly than minimum wage, that $1.60 minimum wage of 1968 could buy more than $5.15 in 2001 (minimum wage chart).

Ironically, this decline in minimum wage has occurred in an economy that is 50% more productive than it was in 1968. If minimum wage had kept pace with productivity gains, it would be about $11.20. But since it has not, at $5.15 an hour, a full time worker earns $6,400 below the poverty line for a family of four in 1999. Consequently the poverty rate for families headed by persons under thirty increased from 16% in 1973 to 33% in 1990, while the number of children in poverty went from 15% in 1970 to 21% in 1998. In 1996, 45% of minimum wage earners worked full time; 58% were women and only 29% were teens (This data, however, did not show how many of the teens were parents and/or heads of households.). Contrary to the arguments against increased minimum wage, studies have shown that most minimum wage earners are adults struggling to raise families. In reality the poor are simply getting poorer as their share of the nation's wealth continues to decline.

# LIVING INCOME STANDARD

The Living Income Standard (LIS) is a livable wage budget that calculates the basic costs families must bear to work and live without income supports, such as food stamps, welfare and church aid. The LIS costs included (housing, food, childcare, transportation, medical, miscellaneous and taxes) vary according to family size, age of children, and locality within the state. It is a no frills, barebones budget of the most basic expenses families have to pay to survive. It does not include savings, children's education, retirement, telephone service, cable, loans or debt service, or entertainment. It does include taxes as well as the child credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Furthermore, the LIS assumes that families have access to healthcare through their employers.

## ONE PARENT, ONE PRESCHOOL CHILD

| MONTHLY EXPENSES | URBAN | AS % OF TOTAL | RURAL | AS % OF TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Housing | $616 | 27% | $437 | 23% |
| Child Care | $442 | 19% | $408 | 21% |
| Food | $256 | 11% | $256 | 14% |
| Health Care | $247 | 11% | $247 | 13% |
| Transportation | $177 | 8% | $211 | 11% |
| Taxes | $270 | 12% | $215 | 11% |
| Miscellaneous | $270 | 12% | $133 | 7% |
| ITEMS NOT INCLUDED | | | | |
| Debt (e.g., car loans) | $0 | | | |
| Savings (e.g., retirement, child's education) | $0 | | | |
| Entertainment (e.g., cable, videos) | $0 | | | |
| TOTAL MONTHLY BUDGET | $2,278 monthly | | $1,907 monthly | |
| TOTAL YEARLY BUDGET | $27,336 yearly | | $22,884 yearly | |
| HOURLY WAGE | $13.14 hourly | | $11.00 hourly | |
| LIS as a Percent of 2001 Federal Poverty Level for Family of Two $12,207 | 224% | | 188% | |

# ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

NAME________________________________________________

PROJECT______________________________________________

What issue (problem, question, goal) are you responding to?

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

List three (3) actions/activities you will carry out in response to the issue (problem, question, goal).

1. ______________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________

Select (3) strategies for completing each goal.

1.a.______________________________________________
  b.______________________________________________
  c.______________________________________________
2.a.______________________________________________
  b.______________________________________________
  c.______________________________________________
3.a.______________________________________________
  b.______________________________________________
  c.______________________________________________

What resources do you have?

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

What resources do you need?

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

# TIMELINE WORKSHEET

**MARCH**

**APRIL**

**MAY**

**JUNE**

**JULY**

**AUGUST**

**SEPTEMBER**

**OCTOBER**

**NOVEMBER**

**DECEMBER**

**JANUARY**

**FEBRUARY**

**MARCH**

# NORTH CAROLINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## COUNTY GOVERNMENT

- COUNTIES: 100
- COUNTY SEAT: town or city where county government conducts business
- GOVERNING BODY: County Board of Commissioners –
    - Elected by citizens of county
    - Serve 2 to 4 year terms;
    - 2 to 7 member board

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- City or town governments
- Two forms of municipal government in North Carolina
    - MAYOR-COUNCIL FORM
        - Mayor: represents the city or town
        - Council: makes laws for the city
    - COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM
        - Council: makes plans for the city; appoints a city manager
        - City Manager: manages all city services; appoints department heads

## ELECTIONS

- For federal, state, and county offices held in even-numbered years.
- For municipal offices held in odd-numbered years.
- For school board posts held in even-numbered years in some counties and in odd-numbered years in other counties.
- Provide the voters of North Carolina the opportunity to make some public policy decisions by adopting or defeating proposals for government action in elections called REFERENDUMS.

# DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL OFFICIALS

### BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

- Have general responsibility for county government
- Set the local property tax rate
- Adopt the county budget
- Pass ordinances, resolutions, and orders to establish county policies

### COUNTY MANAGERS

- Direct the general operations of county government;
- Hire and fire personnel in departments directly under the authority of the board of commissioners (but not those responsible to an independently elected official nor those who by state law are under the state personnel system or an independent board);
- Prepare the county budget;
- Manage county expenditures, and
- Report to the board of commissioners on county government operations and on public problems facing the county

### MUNICIPAL GOVERNING BOARDS

- Make official decisions for the city/town
- Establish local tax rate
- Adopt budgets that dictate how the city will spend its money
- Set policies for municipal services
- Pass ordinances to regulate behavior
- Enter into agreements on behalf of the municipality

### CITY (OR TOWN) MANAGERS

- Carry out the council's policies
- Run city government
- Hire and fire municipal employees
- Coordinate the work of municipal employees
- Advise the council on policy issues
- Propose a municipal budget
- Report to the council on municipal activities

### CITY (TOWN) CLERKS

- Keep official records of the board's meetings and decisions
- Publish notices
- Keep municipal records
- Conduct research for the governing board

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

## COUNTY GOVERNMENT

| NAME | CAMPAIGN CONTACT | TERM BEGAN | TERM ENDS | POSITION ON LIVING WAGE | BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clerk to the Board | | | | | |
| Board Secretary | | | | | |
| County Manager | | | | | |
| Register Of Deeds | | | | | |
| Sheriff | | | | | |
| Independent Boards (Chairs) | | | | | |
| Board Of Elections | | | | | |
| ABC Board | | | | | |
| Health Department Board | | | | | |
| Area Mental Health Board | | | | | |

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

PAGE 2

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

| NAME | CAMPAIGN CONTACT | TERM BEGAN | TERM ENDS | POSITION ON LIVING WAGE | BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Municipal Government | | | | | |
| Town/City Governing Board | | | | | |
| Mayor | | | | | |
| Deputy Mayor | | | | | |
| Manager | | | | | |
| Clerk | | | | | |
| Department Heads | | | | | |