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WOMEN WORK!
The National Network for Women's Employment

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Minimum Wage Increase - A Long Awaited First Step for Working Women

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, Congress approved a raise for the more than 9 million hardworking American women who are paid at or near the minimum wage. Long-time advocate for raising the minimum wage, Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, calls on the President to sign the increase into law and to support future legislation that improves the economic security of women workers, who are disproportionately represented among the nation's lowest earners.

"America's working women won a victory in Washington today," said Jill Miller, Women Work! President and CEO. "By increasing the minimum wage, Congress has taken a long overdue step towards fairly compensating hardworking American working women, and their families."

In 2005, nearly two-thirds of minimum wage workers were women – despite the fact that women accounted for less than half of the U.S. labor force. The majority of American families rely on women's earnings to make up at least half of their family income. If signed into law, the minimum wage would increase from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour over the next two years, giving a family with one minimum wage earner an extra \$4,400 a year for basic needs like food, rent and child care.

Years-long efforts to increase the minimum wage seemed on the brink of success earlier this year when both the House and Senate passed minimum wage provisions. Further action was stalled because the two chambers disagreed over tax breaks proposed for small businesses. In April, after a two month standoff, the minimum wage increase became embroiled in efforts to pass a controversial supplemental war spending bill. The increase was included in the first version of the war spending bill vetoed by the President on May 1. A second version of the bill (HR 2206), also containing the minimum wage increase, was sent to the President today.

"This hard-won increase for the minimum wage is only a *first step* toward increasing economic security for women and families," warns Miller. "Now, our nation's leaders must pass policies that promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement into jobs with family-supporting wages, good benefits, job stability, prospects for advancements and opportunities to balance work and family, without jeopardizing economic self-sufficiency."

Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advances economic justice and equality for women through education, advocacy and organizing. Since 1978, the Network has assisted more than 10 million women to successfully enter, re-enter and advance in the workforce. Through supporting, advocating and increasing women's economic self-sufficiency, Women Work! members strengthen families and communities.

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