

# JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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## Give Louisiana Workers The Gift They Truly Deserve: A Raise

by Jeanie Donovan, MPA, MPH

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### JSRI Upcoming Events

#### January 5

Fr. Kammer will address a visiting group of Iona College students on the post-Katrina social realities of New Orleans.

#### January 8-10

Ms. Baudouin and Fr. Kammer will co-lead the mid-year social justice retreat for eighty Jesuit Volunteers working in the South and Midwest.

#### January 14

Fr. Kammer will lead a meeting of the strategic planning committee of the Ignatian Solidarity Network in Baltimore.

### JSRI Recent Activities

#### December 16

Dr. Weishar and Fr. Kammer addressed a visiting group of students from Santa Clara University on the social realities of post-Katrina New Orleans.

#### December 12

Ms. Donovan spoke at the Gillespie Memorial Community

The Christmas season is in full swing, which for some means an abundance of holiday shopping, eating, and festive gatherings. For others, however, the holiday season is a time of financial strain, unpredictable work schedules, and disappointed children. Minimum wage workers in the retail and service industries bear the brunt of increased consumerism during the holidays and reap little reward. Despite their long and unforgiving hours in the workplace, these workers often come home without enough earnings to pay their rent and bills, let alone buy food for special holiday meals or gifts to put under the Christmas tree.

The cashier at the grocery store, retail clerk at the mall, or server at a holiday party are examples of employees who put in long hours during the holiday season and typically make minimum wage or less. Many of these low-wage workers will end the year earning below the federal poverty line. For example, a single parent with one child who works a full-time minimum wage job earns just \$15,080 before taxes. The federal poverty line for a family of two is \$15,930—and that is considered by many to be an insufficient measure of what a family actually needs to earn to pay for basic expenses. Hard work clearly does not equal economic security.



Photo Credit: <http://www.raisetheminimumwage.com/>

So what can be done to change this? While gift drives and holiday giving campaigns can help working poor families enjoy some Christmas cheer, a more

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Universalist Church.

**December 4**

Dr. Weishar met with local activists to plan a rally in support of Syrian refugees.

**December 2**

Dr. Weishar was interviewed on the [JustLove radio show](#) about the Syrian refugee crisis and the need for the U.S. to remain a safe haven for persecuted people.

**December 1-2**

Fr. Kammer gave talks in Dallas to the Christus Health Executive Formation program.

**November 20**

[Catholic News Agency](#) interviewed Dr. Weishar for an article on the Syrian refugee crisis.

minimum wage laws are mounting. To date, 29 states and Washington D.C. have enacted state laws setting the minimum wage higher than the federal limit of \$7.25. In 2014 alone, 10 state legislatures enacted legislation that increased their state's minimum wage. Unfortunately, Louisiana was not one of them. Despite broad public support, state lawmakers quickly rejected several bills aimed at increasing Louisiana's minimum wage during the 2014 legislative session.

Change may be on the horizon, though. Newly elected Louisiana governor John Bel Edwards has voiced his support for increasing the state's minimum wage. What's more, he is Catholic and his website states that his religious upbringing has "shaped his commitment to his community." Catholic social teaching takes a clear stance on just wages and government's role in protecting workers. The Catechism of the Catholic Church holds that remuneration for work should guarantee workers the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for themselves and their families on the material, social, cultural, and spiritual level. Moreover, Saint John XXIII explained "It can never be right for the State to shirk its obligation of working actively for the betterment of the condition of the workingman."

As 2015 comes to a close and new legislative session approaches, Louisianans must call on their new governor and state legislators to give workers and families the gift they truly deserve: a raise.

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