

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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I Am Your Voice

Will Trump be a Voice for Working-Class Americans?

by Jeanie Donovan, MPA, MPH

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JSRI Future Activities

December 17

Fr. Kammer will present a talk on post-Katrina New Orleans social and economic realities for visiting students from Santa Clara University.

January 6-8

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

January 13

Fr. Kammer will give an address on Mercy for the Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference.

JSRI Recent Activities

December 14-16

Ms. Donovan attended the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN) Conference in St. Louis.

December 13

Fr. Kammer gave a reflection at an Advent observance for the Archdiocese sponsored by the Loyola Institute for Ministry.

December 2

Ms. Donovan delivered an advocacy presentation to "Against Injustice, Why Poetry" English class at Loyola.

December 1

Ms. Donovan was cited in the Child Care Aware report "[Parents and the High Cost of Child Care](#)" regarding the Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credits.

November 16

Dr. Weishar spoke about the need to support undocumented immigrant students and their families at the "Solidarity Walk-Out" organized by the Loyola Community Coalition for Social Justice on the steps of the J. Edgar and Louise S. Monroe Library.

"I am your voice!" That is the declaration Donald Trump made to struggling Americans as he accepted the Republican nomination for President in July. Trump maintained and built upon that message throughout his unconventional campaign. He repeatedly promised working class voters that he would create an economy in which they could thrive, and it was on that message (among others) that he won the presidency.

When he becomes the 45th president on January 20, 2017, Trump will have many opportunities to make good on his pledge to voice the interests of working-class Americans. One of those opportunities will come in the form of defending [new overtime regulations](#) issued by the U.S. Department of Labor in May 2016 that, according to the Economic Policy Institute, have the potential to raise the wages of as many as [12.5 million](#) U.S. workers.

The long-awaited update to federal overtime regulations represented a victory for working Americans who are putting in extra hours but not receiving adequate overtime pay. The rules, which were scheduled to take effect on December 1, 2016, would raise the salary threshold for workers who must be paid overtime from those making \$455 a week to those making \$913 a week. Any worker earning a salary less than \$913 per week would be guaranteed time-and-a-half pay for any hours worked beyond the regular 40-hour work week. The industries that employ the largest numbers of impacted workers include agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; leisure and hospitality; and construction.

Unfortunately, a federal judge in Texas temporarily halted the implementation of those rules on November 22 after a group of states and dozens of business groups argued that it represented federal overreach and would be too costly to implement. Judge Amos Mazzant III put in place an [injunction](#) that blocked the implementation of the rules and now, it will be up to the federal government to fight his decision in the appeals process. That is, if President Trump makes it a priority.

Support for Donald Trump and Salaried Workers Potentially Affected by New Overtime (OT) Rules			
State	% of popular vote for Trump	# of salaried workers potentially impacted by new OT rules	% of salaried workers potentially impacted by new OT rules
Louisiana	58.1%	174,000	24.5%
Mississippi	57.9%	88,000	25.3%
Alabama	62.1%	167,000	26.4%

Source: Ross Eisenbrey and Will Kimball, *The New Overtime Rule Will Directly Benefit 12.5 Million Working People*, Economic Policy Institute, May 17, 2016; and www.USElectionAtlas.org

The 30 states that went for Trump in the presidential election are home to a disproportionate share of workers who stand to benefit from the overtime increase. Notably, in the Deep South states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, which Trump won with overwhelming majorities, large portions of the total salaried workforce would benefit from the proposed overtime rules.

In other words, hundreds of thousands of workers in those states and across the nation, many who voted for Trump, truly need him to be their voice as he pledged during his campaign. It remains to be seen if he will come through on his promise, but you can bet that voters will be watching for the answer.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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