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## **Barrow: “The Current Minimum Wage is Shortchanging Too Many Working Families”**

*Georgia Congressman is leading efforts in the U.S. House of Representatives to vote on raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour*

**Augusta & Savannah, GA** – At only \$5.15 an hour, the current minimum wage is shortchanging too many of America’s working families. That’s the message Georgia Congressman John Barrow (12<sup>th</sup> District) today brought to groups of men and women joining him for press conferences held at Goodwill Industries of Middle Georgia’s Career Center and Job Connection in Augusta and Goodwill Industries of the Coastal Empire in Savannah. Barrow is leading efforts in the House of Representatives to force a vote H.R. 2429, the *Fair Minimum Wage Act*, which would gradually raise the minimum wage over the next two years from its current level of \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour.

“When we talk about raising the minimum wage, we’re not talking about welfare and we’re not talking about a handout,” Barrow said. “We’re talking about fair wages for millions of men and women who work for a living.”

It is estimated that raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour will increase salaries for 7.3 million workers across the country. In 2006, a minimum wage employee working 40 hours a week will earn an annual salary of only \$10,712 – about \$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three.

The minimum wage was first established in 1938, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the *Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938* – setting the nation’s minimum wage at \$0.25 an hour. Since then, the minimum wage has been raised 19 times to keep up with inflation, and is currently set at \$5.15 an hour. The last increase signed into law was nine years ago – in 1997. Since then, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has decreased by 17%. In the history of the nation’s minimum wage, the only time that the country went this long without increasing the minimum was from 1981 to 1990.

“It’s been almost a decade since Congress last raised the minimum wage,” Barrow added. “The prices we all pay for necessities like milk, bread, and gasoline have had double digit increases in that time, yet the minimum wage hasn’t gone up one penny. Neglecting the minimum wage ignores the needs of working Americans struggling to make ends meet. I

believe Congress needs to stop beating around the bush on this issue. Let's have a debate and a fair up or down vote."

In an effort to bring the issue before the full House of Representatives for a vote, Barrow has introduced House Resolution 614. Once the resolution, known as a discharge petition, has been signed by a majority of members, the *Fair Minimum Wage Act* would automatically be brought before the House of Representative for a debate and vote. Congressman Barrow will begin working on rounding up signatures when the House of Representatives returns from recess next Tuesday.

If passed by Congress, the *Fair Minimum Wage Act* would not raise the minimum wage to \$7.25/hour overnight. Instead, it would gradually increase the minimum wage over a two-year period. Current federal minimum wage exemptions for specified business and employees would remain in place, such as small businesses with revenues under \$500,000 a year, or workers on small farms. For a full list of exemptions, visit the U.S. Department of Labor's [website](#).

Joining Congressman Barrow at the press conference in Savannah was Pastor E. A. Baptist of the *United House of Prayer for All People* church. While in Augusta, Barrow welcomed Pastor Hardie Davis of the *Abundant Life Worship Center* church.

"I'm here today with our Congressman because I believe there is a moral obligation to pay people what they've earned," Pastor Baptist said in Savannah. "We have a problem in this country – salaries are not keeping pace with the cost of living. I often hear it from people in my congregation, especially those trying to raise a family on minimum wage. We need fair wages in this country and I'm glad that Congressman Barrow has the courage to do something about it."

"Like all of you, I believe in the value of hard work," Pastor Davis said in Augusta. "I also believe there is a moral obligation to pay people what they've earned for their hard work. Our leaders in Congress have gone almost a decade without raising the minimum wage in this country, and that's neglected the needs of too many hard working men and women."

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