

Washington, DC - 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) released the following statement today after voting in favor of H.R. 2 -- a gradual \$2.10 increase in the federal minimum wage. The bill passed the House by a vote of 315-116:

"It's been almost 10 years since Congress last held a fair, up-or-down vote on raising the minimum wage. During that time, the real value of the minimum wage has dropped to its lowest level in 51 years. That's the equivalent of repeal by neglect. I'm glad to see that the new Congress finally put an end to the political delay tactics of the past few years, voting to pass a gradual \$2.10 increase in the minimum wage -- a vote that was long overdue.

"Minimum wage is not welfare, it's not a handout, and it's not a substitute for hard work. Instead, it's a floor -- a fair hourly wage for millions of Americans working at the bottom of the nation's economic ladder, hardworking Americans trying to move up and make ends meet. In a country where the promise of a better life through hard work is still our greatest asset, Americans who work full time to support their families should not have to live on an income that's thousands of dollars below the poverty level."

In 2006, a minimum wage employee working 40 hours a week earned an annual salary of only \$10,712 -- about \$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. A December 2006 study by the independent, nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute estimated that raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour will increase salaries for nearly 13 million Americans across the country.

In the 109th Congress, Barrow was an outspoken supporter of increasing the minimum wage and was the author of a discharge petition calling for the House to take a fair, up-or-down vote on the issue.

If the Senate passes a similar increase in the minimum wage, the bill will go to President Bush's desk, where he is expected to sign it into law. 60 days after the bill is signed into law the minimum wage will increase to \$5.85 per hour. One year later, the wage would increase to \$6.55 per hour, and then finally to \$7.25 per hour a year after that.

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