**Living Wage Handout**

Some states have passed their own legislation increasing it. For a state-by-state list, see: [www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0930886.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0930886.html)

Review the history of the Fair Labor Relations Act (the legislation passed in 1938 as part of FDR’s New Deal – it guaranteed a minimum wage for the first time in U.S. history). An historical overview of the Fair Labor Relations Act is available from the U.S. Department of Labor:

[www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/flsa1938.htm](http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/flsa1938.htm).

Note that the establishment of a minimum wage was intended to help full-time workers avoid poverty and/or unfair treatment by employers.

Does the current minimum wage meet its intended goal of helping workers avoid poverty? Who benefits the most from keeping the current level where it is? Consider the impact on the following groups: employers, consumers, and heads of household, teens, and part-timers earning supplemental income.

Comparing a Minimum Wage with a Living Wage

In recent years, many people have begun to campaign for a “living wage” guarantee rather than a “minimum wage” guarantee. What do you think the differences might be?

In your group, brainstorm a list of items that would need to be factored in when determining a living wage. Examples might include local housing costs, available transportation, insurance and health care costs, cost of food, etc

Calculating a Living Wage

Option 1:

Using the Handout that was given to you. Research specific costs for goods and services in your community. Use that information to calculate a living wage for their community. Fill out the chart.

Option 2:

Your group will discuss the kinds of items that must be included when calculating a living wage. Then, go to: [www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/](http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/).

By typing in your location, the site calculates a living wage for you.

Once you have a final figure for the living wage, write down your reactions. Are you surprised at the amount they would need to earn just to get by? Together, make a list of the kinds of jobs available to people in your community that pay that kind of wage. How many of those jobs would someone without a high school diploma be qualified to do?

Write a group summary of what you have learned during this lesson. Ask each each group member in your group to finish this sentence: One new thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Examples of Living Wages in our Communities: <http://livingwage.mit.edu/places/2609984000>

<http://livingwage.mit.edu/places/2612580700>, and <http://livingwage.mit.edu/places/2609976460>