



5 things you can do to support workers

Labor Day and Beyond

Labor Day weekend is a time to honor workers, especially those who struggle to earn living wages and make ends meet. Major faith traditions encourage and respect hard work, but also call for workers to be treated with respect and dignity and paid living wages.

Virginia United Ways' 2024 Report, ***ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Virginia***, documents how 40 percent of households in Virginia face financial hardship. Although wages have increased over the last few years, they have not kept pace with the increasing costs for housing, transportation, food and childcare. As the 2023 report summarized it, **"The crux of the problem is a mismatch between earnings and the costs of basics."**

Workers in Virginia need higher wages and more support for basics like housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare and transportation. Although there are clearly things individuals can do, this gross mismatch is a structural problem requiring policy interventions. For more than 40 years, Virginia's faith communities have partnered with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) to provide a faith voice on Virginia's policies and practices. Together people of faith have worked to expand Medicaid to working families, raise the minimum wage, stop and deter wage theft, and limit predatory lending. Learn more at www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org.

Continue reading to see how you can support workers and advocate better policies for workers with VICPP!

1) **Pray for all workers**, but especially those paid poverty wages who are so essential for Virginia's economy, such as food service workers, cashiers, retail workers, personal care aides and nursing assistants.

2) **Tip generously and speak kindly**. Workers who earn their livelihood through tips and interactions with customers are not always treated well. Tip generously and speak kindly with workers who wait on or serve you.

3) **Be watchful against wage theft**. Wage theft, the illegal cheating of workers' wages, is common practice in many low-wage sectors, such as landscape, restaurants, residential construction, retail, and others. If you, your congregation, or your place of businesses, hire contracted services, make sure that workers are paid legally and fairly. Otherwise, you may inadvertently be contributing to wage theft. For more information, visit www.wagetheftva.org.

4) **Support living wages**. Encourage your congregation and place of employment to pay living wages to all employees and expect the same from contracted businesses.

5) **Advocate policies that will help workers in low-paying jobs**. Sign up to receive VICPP's Action Alerts to impact Virginia's policies such as increasing the minimum wage, setting a paid sick day standard and increasing support for affordable housing and childcare assistance. Visit www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org.