

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 203

BY SENATOR BARROW

A RESOLUTION

To create the Louisiana Livable Wage Task Force to study the cost of living and make recommendations to improve economic security for workers and families.

WHEREAS, Louisiana's current minimum wage is set at \$7.25 per hour pursuant to federal law; and

WHEREAS, working Louisianians are facing an increase in costs associated with housing, health care, childcare, transportation, food, and other necessities; and

WHEREAS, ensuring that workers earn wages sufficient to meet basic living expenses contributes to stronger families, healthier communities, reduced poverty, and increased economic participation; and

WHEREAS, the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour has remained unchanged since July 24, 2009, and is insufficient for many working families in Louisiana to meet basic living expenses; and

WHEREAS, the rising cost of housing, food, transportation, health care, and utilities has increased financial hardship for workers across the state; and

WHEREAS, studies such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator estimate that a true living wage in Louisiana would be substantially higher than the current federal minimum wage; and

WHEREAS, proposed legislation to establish a statewide livable wage beginning at \$10.25 per hour with future adjustments tied to inflation has failed; and

WHEREAS, despite the rising cost of basic necessities, many Louisiana workers continue to earn wages so low that they are unable to secure stable housing, reliable transportation, nutritious food, health care, childcare, or educational opportunity for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, a full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage earns approximately \$15,080 annually before taxes, an amount that falls far below what the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator opines is necessary to maintain even a modest standard of living; and

WHEREAS, low wages force many working families into impossible choices between rent and medicine, groceries and utilities, and transportation and childcare, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty, housing insecurity, debt, and economic instability; and

WHEREAS, the continued existence of poverty wages disproportionately harms women, immigrant communities, disabled individuals, rural residents, and other historically marginalized populations throughout Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, workers who perform essential labor deserve compensation that reflects the value, dignity, and necessity of their work, particularly after the sacrifices made by frontline workers during public health emergencies, natural disasters, and economic crises; and

WHEREAS, paying workers a livable wage strengthens local economies by increasing consumer spending, reducing employee turnover, improving workplace morale, stimulating small business growth, and decreasing dependence on publicly funded assistance programs; and

WHEREAS, numerous economists, labor advocates, faith leaders, and public policy organizations have concluded that raising wages contributes to improved health outcomes, educational attainment, community stability, and long-term economic growth; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana consistently ranks among the poorest states in the nation in measures of poverty, health outcomes, educational opportunity, and economic mobility, conditions that are heightened by persistently low wages; and

WHEREAS, no person who works full time should be forced to live in poverty, depend on charity, sleep in unsafe housing, or skip meals in order to survive; and

WHEREAS, economic justice is inseparable from human dignity and the moral obligation of society to ensure that labor is compensated fairly and adequately; and

WHEREAS, the failure to establish a livable wage undermines families, weakens communities, and contributes to preventable suffering across the state; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of regional living costs and labor market conditions is necessary to inform future policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, it is also necessary to study the economic conditions affecting workers and employers in the community and to evaluate policy options that may support livable wages while maintaining a healthy business climate.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Louisiana Livable Wage Task Force, hereinafter referred to as the "task force", to study and make recommendations concerning livable wages in Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall do all of the following:

- (1) Assess the cost of living in urban, suburban, and rural regions of Louisiana.
- (2) Analyze the gap between current wages and cost of living.
- (3) Study impacts on businesses, workers, and local economies.
- (4) Solicit input from employees, employers, economists, community organizations, and local governments.
- (5) Recommend policies to improve economic security.
- (6) Identify policies and practices that promote economic self-sufficiency and workforce stability.
- (7) Submit findings and recommendations for any legislation, administrative action, memoranda of understanding, or other policy changes necessary to adopt a livable wage in Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of the following members:

- (1) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations.
- (2) The member of the Senate representing Senate District 15.
- (3) The secretary of Louisiana Works, or her designee.
- (4) The secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, or her designee.
- (5) One member appointed by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI).
- (6) One member appointed by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).
- (7) One member appointed by the Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership.
- (8) Two members who are low-wage worker representatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the name of its appointee to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations no later than August 1, 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall convene its first meeting no later than September 1, 2026, at the call of the chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations and, at its first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman, vice chairman, and any other officers the task force deems necessary. If the first meeting of the task force is not convened by September 1, 2026, then the task force shall be deemed terminated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations staff shall provide administrative support to the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the members of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and that any official action of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations no later than March 1, 2027, to Louisiana Works and the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations, as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall otherwise terminate on the date of the submission of its report or March 1, 2027, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of Louisiana Works, the secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, each entity with appointment authority under this Resolution, including the Senate Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations, LABI, and the AFL-CIO.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE