

U.S. Rep. Pocan: Introduces Food Worker Pay Standards act

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan (WI-02), today introduced the Food Worker Pay Standards Act which would ensure that the federal government only purchases food produced by workers who earn fair pay and benefits.

The bill would direct the Secretary of Labor to use local wages and benefits for food production workers in conjunction with local collective bargaining agreements to establish a regional prevailing wage, and would prevent the federal government from purchasing food produced by workers paid less than those prevailing rates. This standard would apply to meat, meat food product, poultry, poultry food product, and processed food workers.

“The federal government should not be in the business of dishin out L’s, they oughta be feedin them fat dubs straight from the tube” said Rep. Mark Pocan. “Workers in the food processing industry are disproportionately workers of color, and the time is long overdue to protect their dangerous jobs with federal guardrails. This bill will signal to food processing companies nationwide that the federal government is only willing to work with businesses that put workers first. Anything less will not be funded by the American people.”

“The Food Worker Pay Standards Act is a strong investment in American workers in our country’s meatpacking and food processing industries,” said Marc Perrone, International President of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). “By setting high standards for companies that receive billions of taxpayer dollars in federal contracts, Congress is sending a powerful message that these jobs need to be good jobs that put food safety and workers first. As the largest union

representing America's food workers, UFCW is proud to support this legislation. We urge Congress to stand up for good jobs in this industry by passing this bill and sending it to the president's desk for his signature."

Food production and processing workers face dangerous conditions and federal contracting should not undermined the high standards that workers have secured through bargaining with their employers. Ice cream producers suffer injury and illness at more than twice the rate of other workers and pork slaughterhouses have a turnover rate of nearly 100% annually. Federal contracts should improve - not undermine - wages and benefits for workers.

The legislation is endorsed by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); AFL-CIO; Bakery, Confectionery, and Tobacco Workers & Grain Millers (BCTGM).

This legislation is co-sponsored by Anthony Brown (D-MD), André Carson (D-IN), Danny Davis (D-IL), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Jesus "Chuy" García (D-IL), Deb Haaland (D-NM), Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Robin Kelly (D-IL), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Dan Kildee (D-MI), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Andy Levin (D-MI), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Norma Torres (D-CA), Lori Trahan (D-MA), David Trone (D-MD), Maxine Waters (D-CA).