

# Our Wisconsin: Grassroots activists seek \$15 minimum wage

Posted on Friday, Mar 5, 2021

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Members and supporters of Our Wisconsin Revolution have sent [nearly 100 letters](#) to Wisconsin Sens. Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson this week demanding their elected officials support a proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

These grassroots activists asked the senators to tell Vice President Kamala Harris to overrule the Senate parliamentarian and keep the \$15 minimum wage provision in the American Rescue Plan covid relief bill, as well as to abolish the filibuster, a procedural relic used in the past to block civil rights legislation and now threatening other progressive programs.

“A [recent study](#) found that raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would lift 32 million workers out of poverty — including 843,000 in Wisconsin,” the letter stated. “Of these Wisconsinites, the majority are women and people of color working on the front lines during a pandemic.”

The American Rescue Plan providing \$1.9 trillion in coronavirus relief passed the U.S. House on a mostly party-line vote of 219-212 on February 27. Included in the House version was a provision to gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025.

Now the American Rescue Plan is headed to the Senate, where the \$15 minimum wage is in jeopardy because the relief package is going through a process called reconciliation, which allows the bill to be passed by a simple majority rather than a filibuster-proof majority of 60 votes.

Under Senate rules, only items relevant to the federal budget can be passed through reconciliation. However, an unelected Senate parliamentarian found that the minimum wage increase is not related to the federal budget and shouldn't be in the covid relief bill.

"We disagree with the parliamentarian's decision," the letter stated. "Giving workers a much-needed raise would allow them to get off federal assistance, saving billions of dollars in taxpayer money and letting people spend more at local businesses, revitalizing the economy for everyone. The minimum wage has not been raised since 2007 - this is long overdue."

The parliamentarian's decision is not binding. It is an advisory position that can be overruled by Vice President Harris, and has been overruled by vice presidents in the past. Grassroots activists are asking their senators to tell Harris to ignore the parliamentarian and keep the \$15 minimum wage in the American Rescue Plan.

A related issue is the filibuster — an arcane procedure that allows any senator to speak for hours or even days to hold up any piece of legislation unless at least 60 other senators vote to close debate. That's why legislation not passed through reconciliation needs at least 60 votes.

"In a Senate divided 50-50 along party lines, with only a tie-breaking vote from the vice president, that just won't do," the letter stated. "We will never be able to pass our progressive agenda that the vast majority of Americans support — Medicare for All, Green New Deal, student loan forgiveness, criminal justice reform, and more —

as long as these programs can be filibustered by a single senator.”

Our Wisconsin Revolution’s letter campaign to Sens. Baldwin and Johnson continues through the weekend.

### About Our Wisconsin Revolution

Our Wisconsin Revolution is an independent social justice organization working to make both our economy and our government a true democracy — of, by and for the people. We work in four issue areas: restoring a real democracy, creating an economy that works for all of us, ensuring quality public goods and services, and enacting fair taxes. Our formation was inspired by Bernie Sanders’ run for president in 2016 and is part of a national movement supporting a new generation of progressive leaders and empowering millions to fight for transforming our political and economic systems to be responsive to the needs of working families.