

We are here on behalf of The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Virginia. We are a statewide organization of Unitarian Universalists working for change. Unitarian Universalist Principles guide us in creating a more just world by being an active voice in the public arena.

The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism guide our advocacy by supporting bills that ensure the inherent worth and dignity of every person are upheld and that there is justice, equity, and compassion with a goal for peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Ensuring income equality is important in upholding our values. Raising the minimum wage, Earned Income Credit and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are all programs that help families out of poverty.

We agree with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy regarding their stand on minimum wage, Earned Income Credit and SNAP:

“Over the past 30 years, the rich have been getting richer while the poor have been getting poorer. Between 2007 and 2012, the highest income earners saw their wages increase by 10 percent while the wages of the lowest income earners dropped by 8 percent.

Raising the wage does not hurt business and many larger businesses (Costco, Gap, IKEA and Whole Foods Market) are already offering higher wages to better compete for a quality workforce. Businesses can be more efficient when their employees are more dedicated and less likely to quit, as they would be when paid a higher wage.

**A higher minimum wage helps keep families out of poverty and by extension it helps reduce government spending on programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that provide food assistance for low-income families. Increasing the wage, rewarding work, and decreasing need for assistance programs is a true win-win for Virginia.”**

**Earned Income Credit** A healthy economy needs working families who can purchase basic goods and services – not families who are scraping to get by on shrinking paychecks. Virginia’s Earned Income Credit offers a modest credit for low-wage workers with families. It counts against their income taxes so that the less they owe, the more they have available for their family. Making EIC refundable would allow workers to accrue tax credits that offset regressive taxes that disproportionately impact low-income workers.

**SNAP** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has its roots in the federal agricultural policy response to the Great Depression. Over the life of the program, the win-win results from low-income people getting the support they need to feed their families while farmers, food producers and grocers benefit from the boost in business when times are tight. The Center remains opposed to any proposed block grants to SNAP and other anti-poverty programs as grants would force dramatic cuts to services and support for people in need, thereby limiting program effectiveness.

The UULMVA stands in support of bills that increase the minimum wage, e.g. SB681, and we respectfully ask that you support this bill:

**SB 681 Minimum wage; increases from its current federally mandated level to \$10.10.00 per hour over two years.**

**Summary as introduced:**

**Minimum wage.** Increases the minimum wage from its current federally mandated level of \$7.25 per hour to \$8.00 per hour effective July 1, 2015, to \$9.00 per hour effective July 1, 2016, and to \$10.10 per hour effective July 1, 2017, unless a higher minimum wage is required by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).