

**AN INITIATIVE OF HOUSE THE HOMELESS, INC.**

June 17, 2020

An Open Letter to U.S. Congress, Economic Leaders, and Police Leadership:

Two ideas to help address inequities and create transparency re living wages and militarization of local police.

**First**, as a white boy growing up in Wappoo, SC, I witnessed separate and unequal between the races... White ONLY water fountains and so many other prejudices and injustices. Always looking for solutions, I grew up to recognize that people of color not only got all the “dirty jobs” that paid next to nothing but since then, I have seen that the same people make up the majority of any group falling into homelessness because the Federal Minimum Wage won’t sustain them. Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King once said that, “There is nothing but short-sightedness that prevents every American family from having a livable income.” They didn’t care that he had a golden tongue until he joined that sanitation worker’s strike. When he started attacking *Income Inequality*, they shot him.

The United States does not have a *single* economy as the Federal Minimum Wage indicates. In fact, we are a nation of *a thousand plus economies*. The single most expensive item in the budget of every American is the cost of housing. As we all know, it costs a different amount to live in New York City than it does to live in Austin, TX or East McKeesport, PA, Santa Cruz, CA, or Camden, NJ etc.

Unfortunately, the day a \$15/hour wage is passed, it begins to deteriorate due to inflation. In addition, \$15/hour is so little in some cities that more than \$20 is required if a worker is going to be able to afford an efficiency apt. Simply raising the wage to \$15/hour will not get one homeless person off our streets and at the same time, 3.5 million people are experiencing homelessness off & on, throughout the year due mostly to insufficient income.

At the same time, \$15/hour will *devastate small businesses* in rural and small-town America.

But by using the Universal Living Wage and ***indexing*** the minimum wage ***to the local cost of housing***, simply means two things: 1) not one penny more than is needed to attain basic rental housing will be required, and 2) **no matter how high the cost of housing is raised, if a worker puts in 40 hours of work per week, (whether from one job or more), that worker will always be able to afford a roof overhead...other than a bridge.**

This raises people up. It *stimulates the local and national economy* because when we put housing dollars into people’s pockets, builders will build truly affordable housing because they want those new dollars. And finally, *97% of these new dollars will be spent back into the economy* according to every study on record.

Imagine a wage that *encourages people to work, deflates the dole, and saves millions of tax dollars!* See Facts/Myths [www.UniversalLivingWage.org](http://www.UniversalLivingWage.org) Please read the book: ***Looking Up at the Bottom Line: The Struggle for the Living Wage.***

**Second**, the federal government should no longer simply give military style weapons to our municipalities. Instead, these assault vehicles, tanks etc. should be ***sold*** to our cities for one dollar per item. In this fashion, every item will be made part of all local budgets and each item will have to be debated and voted on. Is this a good fit for our community? Who will pay for special training, replacement parts, etc.? Dozens of issues will be debated. Transparency and hopefully common sense will get a seat at the table.

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