



Late Backup

Diocese of Austin

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Office of the Bishop

October 24, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Since the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, the Catholic Church has championed the dignity of work and the rights of workers. In 1891 Pope Leo was concerned that low wages were keeping families from being able to provide adequately for their children. He was concerned about working hours that kept parents from being home to parent their children. He was concerned that the economic situation was forcing children and youth into the workforce preventing them from getting an education.

Are things very different today? A minimum wage job does not provide enough income for even two people to be above the federal poverty line. A family is in jeopardy if there is no health insurance for the worker. And that worker faces great uncertainty as they age without retirement benefits.

I call on our City Council to ensure that tax dollars from our citizens **not** be used to subsidize poverty for our citizens. I call on our city leaders to pass an ordinance that ensures that, whenever tax-funded financial incentives are given to corporations, those corporations agree to support workers employed on these projects by:

- Paying the city/ county wage floor, or the prevailing wage, if higher
- Requiring Worker's Compensation Insurance
- Continuing emphasis on hiring hard-to-employ workers
- Requiring safety training
- Encouraging workforce development
- Ensuring taxpayer Return On Investment
- And allowing for reasonable exceptions

As one who also must live within a budget, I understand the importance of good stewardship. But the common good of our city requires that its workers be compensated so that they provide for themselves and their families. I call on our city leaders to do what is right and just! Vote yes on Item 56!

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vasquez
 Bishop of Austin