



LABOR

MINIMUM WAGE

Senator Akaka understands that too many working Americans are confronted with difficult financial situations. He believes that economic education and financial literacy are a major part of the solution for people to improve their unique situations. However, such efforts cannot truly succeed without sound fiscal policies to keep our economy strong. Many American families are having difficulties making ends meet. For Hawaii, where the unemployment rate has been low for some time, the issue is more about under-employment and the lack of decent wages. That's why Hawaii has historically had one of the highest rates of two-income families and parents working more than one job.

He believes the minimum wage needs to be increased and has supported such increases in the past. But the fact is the national minimum wage has been increased only 19 times since it was established in 1938. The latest occurred in September 1997, almost a decade ago. The earnings of average Americans have grown little, and the overall distribution of income has become increasingly unequal. The real value of the minimum wage has fallen by 11 percent since the last increase. Currently, a minimum wage employee working full time earns about \$4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. The minimum wage needs to be raised to help those millions of Americans who are rapidly becoming a permanent disadvantaged class in our society.

Over the past 30 years, Senator Akaka have fought for the rights of workers to secure a better future by providing access to affordable health care and promoting educational opportunities for all, particularly individuals who are seeking gainful employment in a new field.