

America's Tomorrow: Equity Is the Superior Growth Model

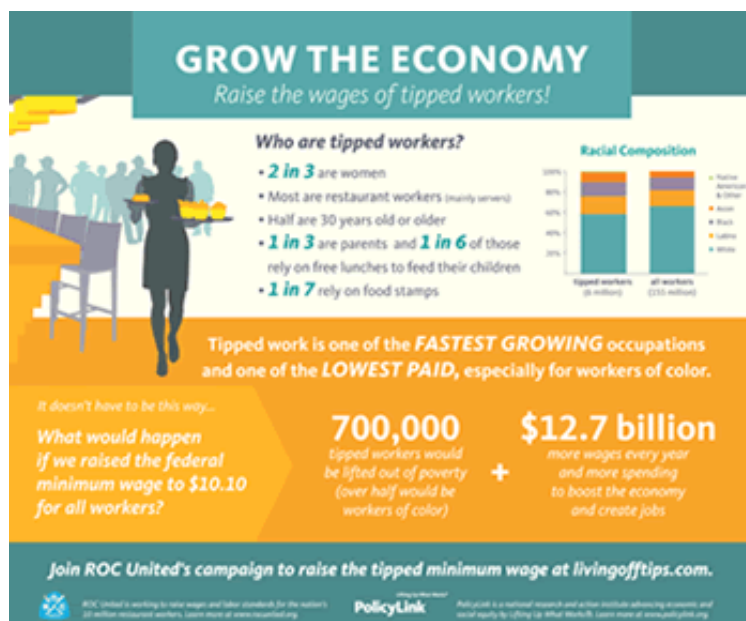


November 26, 2013

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Features

Join the Campaign to Raise the Wages of Tipped Workers



Click on the image to see the full infographic.

Here's a simple way to grow an equitable economy and lift 700,000 people out of poverty: pay a decent wage to restaurant servers and other tipped workers. If Congress raised the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour for all workers, tipped workers – all 6 million of them – would see their paychecks grow by nearly \$13 billion. That boosts consumer spending and creates jobs. Momentum is building to push for a higher, fairer minimum wage. Check out our [new infographic](#) with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC United) to learn more and [join the campaign](#) to raise the tipped minimum wage.

Omaha's Healthy Food Dividend

In Brief

Thank a Food Worker

Nearly 20 million people in the United States grow, prepare, and serve the food that we eat. This week, for International Food Workers Week, we give thanks to those who make a living by feeding us, from restaurant servers to small, independent grocery store owners. Learn more about food workers and how you can support them [here](#).

Houston Expands Protections for Hourly Workers

Houston became the first city in Texas to [pass an ordinance](#) expanding protections for hourly workers – who are disproportionately low-income and of color – from wage theft by their employers. The law also prevents companies convicted of wage theft from being eligible for city contracts. The unanimous vote by the city council comes after years of organizing by a [broad coalition](#) of responsible businesses and community, faith, and labor organizations. Learn about other city and state initiatives to protect hourly workers' wages [here](#).



A University of Nebraska extension nutrition educator and a volunteer provide a taste testing opportunity for customers at JND Grocery.

Healthy foods build strong small businesses in low-income communities of color. That's the take-away from the growing movement to get small grocers to stock healthier fare. Local store owners and residents are finding that this public health strategy, designed to increase access to fresh, nutritious foods, is stabilizing local businesses and strengthening neighborhood economies.

"It's made a huge impact," said Dave Adams, owner of JND Grocery in Omaha, about his decision to quadruple the shelf space of his produce section, from two feet to eight feet. "It has definitely paid off" in higher sales, happier customers, and a sense of pride and community connection.

Stores like JND, which has just three aisles and two cash registers, are the commercial soul of thousands of disinvested communities. A [new report](#) by PolicyLink and The Food Trust, *Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters: A Review of the Research*, highlights the potential economic impact of programs like these on a national scale.

"Corner stores are very common throughout low-income communities – urban, suburban, and rural alike," said Brianna Almaguer Sandoval, senior associate for The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative in Philadelphia. "They're often the only business in those communities. Supporting them reinvests dollars back into those communities. It also helps to improve commercial corridors and revitalize the local economy."

New Video! All-In Nation: Building a Just Economy

The Ford Foundation hosted an inspiring event last month about how to foster equitable growth. If you weren't in the room with PolicyLink, the Center for American Progress, Soledad O'Brien, and many equity leaders, we've got the next best thing! Grab some popcorn and settle in – [the whole day is on tape](#).

JND is one of 10 participants in the Healthy Neighborhood Store Project in Omaha, part of an [ambitious initiative](#) to make the city and surrounding Douglas County healthier places to live, work, play, and raise children. The project targeted small grocers in neighborhoods shown, through a health department survey, to have inadequate access to healthy food. The project zeroed in on low-income communities with relatively high populations of color – primarily Latinos in South Omaha and African Americans in North Omaha.

The stores, all locally or regionally owned, range from three to 45 employees. The project worked with owners on pricing, placing, and promoting healthier items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, and nonfat dairy products. The project also helped the owners sell produce that was more conveniently marketed for individuals using WIC vouchers, which increased produce purchases and decreased waste. To educate and entice customers, the project conducted cooking demonstrations in the stores.

With an average \$2,000 investment per store, chiefly for enhancements like display baskets and signs, the project improved healthy food access for 50,000 residents while boosting sales and community goodwill for the grocers, said Mary Balluff, chief of community health and nutrition services at the Douglas County Health Department. And as produce sales increase, the grocers report less product spoilage – one of the biggest barriers to stocking and selling fresh foods in a small store.

"The more you're selling, the fresher it is too," Adams said.

Early data collected in corner stores in Philadelphia also point to success. Produce sales increased by almost 50 percent, and water sales by 76 percent, in the first three months of a pilot program to make healthy foods a centerpiece of these stores, according to data provided by The Food Trust, which ran the pilot.

In Omaha, the gains for grocers aren't only or even primarily monetary.

"Store owners have commented about how neighborhood associations are engaging them to be an active part of the neighborhood," said Sarah Schram, a clinical nutritionist at the Douglas County Health Department. "Through simple things like, can we use your parking lot for the neighborhood

summer picnic? Will you donate fruit or water for neighborhood association meetings? Five years ago, the neighborhood association didn't ask them to be involved. The community perception has shifted to a positive one."

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America's Tomorrow highlights campaigns, leaders, policies, reports, and local models that are advancing equity as an economic imperative. It is produced by Chris Schildt, Sarah Treuhافت, Fran Smith, and Ana Louie. To learn more, visit the *America's Tomorrow* [webpage](#).

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