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ALEC Introduced 67 Bills Targeting the Wages of Low-Paid Workers in 25 States during 2011-2012 Legislative Sessions

Minimum wage laws remain a major target for ALEC's lobbying agenda in 2013

Washington, DC – Since January 2011, legislators from 31 states have introduced 105 bills aiming to repeal or weaken core wage standards at the state and local level, and 67 of these 105 bills were directly sponsored or co-sponsored by legislators affiliated with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), according to a [new report](#) by the National Employment Law Project.

With President Obama calling for a federal minimum wage increase in this year's State of the Union address – and with Congressional leadership in the House and Senate preparing to introduce legislation in the coming weeks to raise the federal minimum wage – this report sheds light on ALEC's countervailing campaign to weaken wage standards at the state level by repealing state minimum wage laws, reducing minimum wage rates for youth and tipped workers, weakening overtime compensation policies, and preventing the establishment of local living wage and prevailing wage ordinances.

"State legislatures have historically served as crucial sources of momentum for passing federal legislation to raise the wages of low-paid workers. ALEC's focus on weakening or repealing critical labor standards at the state level threatens the wages and economic security of workers across the country," said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. "With real wages for low wage workers already declining in the post-recession recovery, the last thing America's workers need is a frontal assault on pay and overall compensation by state legislatures."

Eleven of the 67 bills promoted by ALEC between 2011 and 2012 were ultimately signed into law. While most of the remaining bills failed to gain further legislative traction, their introduction has served to distract and delay the push for improving wages and workplace conditions across the country. Much of the post-recession job growth has been in low-wage occupations, accelerating the trend of declining job quality and wages that has characterized the American labor market for most of the past 35 years. As more than a dozen state legislatures across the country begin considering legislation to raise minimum wages this year, ALEC's wage suppression agenda threatens to divert attention away from the key policies that will address this growth of low-wage work in the U.S.

Republican supermajorities now control 15 [state legislatures](#) throughout the country, a nearly five-fold increase in the number of legislatures under veto-proof Republican control since 2009. As ALEC homes in on economic issues, its wage-related legislative agenda in 2011-2012 provides a look at what the upcoming years will hold.

The report identified a piece of legislation as an ALEC-affiliated bill according to two criteria: (1.) the bill must have closely reflected a policy proposal expressed in one of ALEC's "model bills," which are meant to serve as templates for crafting legislation in accordance with ALEC's lobbying priorities; (2.) the bill must also have been sponsored by an ALEC-affiliated state legislator. The report identified dues-paying members of ALEC through [SourceWatch](#), a database sponsored by the Center for Media and Democracy.

ALEC's wage suppression agenda targets workers in the low-wage sectors that are forming the core of the U.S. economy: According to a [study](#) released in August 2012 by the National Employment Law Project, 60 percent of jobs lost during the recession were middle-wage and high-wage occupations, while 58 percent of jobs gained in the recovery have been low-wage occupations.

As wages remain low for workers in retail and food services, many of the [largest employers](#) in these sectors remain in strong financial condition: 78 percent of the 50 largest low-wage employers have been profitable every year for the past three years, and 63 percent are earning higher profits now than before the recession.

The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit www.nelp.org or www.raisetheminimumwage.org.

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