

A Moral Mandate: Make Corporations Pay Their Worker's A Living Wage

The 2026 midterm elections offer a unique opportunity for statehouses and a Congress elected by a new fusion coalition of voters to pass policies that can push toward a Third Reconstruction of America. This political moment is the result of years of labor and birth pangs, but a new reality cannot be born until politicians who've been given power by the people act to show what that power can do. This fact sheet outlines one key policy idea from the Third Reconstruction Resolution which has been introduced in two of the past three Congresses to offer a road map for policies that lift from the bottom so everyone can rise.

Make corporations pay their employees a living wage
Solving the current "affordability crisis" will require safety net repairs and better ways to control basic costs. But to fix this problem for the long-term, we need to put an end to the poverty wage business model that is all too prevalent in Corporate America. The 20 largest employers of low-wage U.S. workers employ approximately 6.7 million people in the United States. Their median worker wages in 2024 ranged from $9,602 (Ross Stores) to $47,607 (MGM Resorts) — compared to an average CEO compensation of *over $18 million.*

Most of these firms pay their workers so little that employees are forced to rely on public benefits like SNAP and Medicaid. Yet their CEOs make, on average, nearly 900 times more than their median employees — and their companies often spend billions on stock buybacks, artificially hiking their stock prices (and with it, CEO pay) instead of raising pay for workers.

State legislatures can take action to raise the minimum wage, and the in-coming Congress can put living wage legislation on the President's desk.