

SHOULD ESSENTIAL WORKERS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RECEIVE HAZARD PAY?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

HOW THESE ESSENTIAL WORKERS FEEL ABOUT THE RISKS THEY FACE

PBS Newshour | May 1, 2020 | Video
6:42 minutes

Essential workers are maintaining goods and services, despite the risks posed by the pandemic. Grocery store employees, bus drivers and sanitation workers are in close contact with the public, and many say they don't have what they need to stay safe.

- While many employees say they need more protective gear, hazard pay, and time off, companies argue that their policies have shifted enough to keep their employees safe.
- Annette Brown, a hospital sanitation worker in Baltimore, says she was told more than 17 COVID patients will come into the hospital on an average day. She feels her options are to keep working without protection or quit/take unpaid time off.
- David Schaeffer, a retail manager at a grocery store chain in Columbus, Ohio, states that his customer service employees have to deal with customers yelling and swearing at them, and being angry about being unable to return items, despite the fact that they have no control over store policies.

WHY ESSENTIAL WORKERS ARE NOT PAID MORE AFTER THEIR JOBS GOT RISKY

NPR | May 22, 2020 | Audio
3:35 minutes

Many essential workers are making the same pay that they were before the pandemic, before their jobs got risky, despite the fact that riskier jobs are supposed to pay more.

- Higher-risk jobs only pay more to compensate for risk in a competitive labor market, when workers have options and employers are competing for workers.
- When no one is competing with employers for labor, companies have the wage-setting power (not workers), and wages are just not likely to go up.
- Democrats in the House and Senate proposed giving essential workers extra money for the risk they face, adding \$200 billion in hazard pay into what they called the HEROES Act. As of late 2020, no such act has passed.

'WE'RE RISKING OUR LIVES': FRONT-LINE FEDERAL WORKERS SUE FOR HAZARD PAY

NPR | August 7, 2020 | Audio

3:27 minutes

A group of federal workers is suing their employer, the US Government, to receive hazard pay during the coronavirus pandemic.

- Employees say that their employers have not provided adequate PPE and screening programs to catch employees who are asymptomatic or have yet to show symptoms.
- The lawyer who brought the lawsuit forward says that government employees are risking their lives to keep the country running and keep everyone in America safe, and are entitled to hazard pay that the government isn't paying them.
- The lawyers say there are as many as 100,000 federal workers who qualify for hazard pay in these conditions.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Essential worker
- Frontline worker
- Hazard pay
- Labor market
- PPE (personal protective equipment)

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.