

# SHOULD THE U.S. RAISE THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE TO \$15 AN HOUR?

*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.

### SHOULD WE RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE?

Above the Noise | December 6, 2019 | Video  
9:34 minutes

The minimum wage in the U.S. has been \$7.25 per hour since 2009. Raising it could lift low-income workers out of poverty, but it might also kill jobs and potentially hurt the economy.

- A report from the Congressional Budget Office calculated that raising the minimum wage would boost the pay of 27 million workers and lift 1.3 million people above the poverty line.
- While many argue for a \$15 minimum wage, another report from the CBO predicts that doing so could force employers to lay off 1.3 million workers.
- A study by the Economic Policy Institute found that for every dollar the minimum wage is increased, spending on government assistance drops by \$5.2 billion.
- If forced to pay higher wages, many businesses will have to charge higher prices to pay for it, which could ultimately result in higher prices for consumers.

### WHY ANAHEIM'S LOW-WAGE WORKERS STRUGGLE TO KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS

PBS NewsHour | January 29, 2018 | Video  
7:25 minutes

Anaheim, CA has a booming economy driven by tourism. Hotel workers, restaurant servers, bartenders, housekeepers, cashiers, and other low-wage workers are a vital part of what keeps the city running, but many of them are struggling to afford stable housing.

- The wage a worker needs to afford a basic apartment in Anaheim is \$26 per hour, but many of the city's workers are only making between \$11 and \$13 per hour.
- Disneyland is a popular employer in Anaheim, employing more than 30,000 full and part-time workers. A survey of 5,000 of the company's union employees found that more than 85% of respondents made less than \$15 an hour and 73% stated they do not have enough money to cover basic monthly expenses.
- One woman works two minimum wage jobs to pay for \$1000 per month to house her family of seven in a converted garage with an outdoor shower and no kitchen.

## HOUSE PASSES BILL THAT WOULD RAISE THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE TO \$15

PBS NewsHour | July 18, 2019 | Article

360 words

In July 2019, a bill to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour was approved by the democratic-majority House of Representatives.

- This was the first legislation that would have raised pay to \$15 per hour from \$2.13 per hour for tipped workers, making it so tipped workers would earn the same as others making minimum wage.
- A report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office state that more than 30 million workers would see larger paychecks with a higher wage.
- The same report from the CBO also said between 1 million and 3 million jobs could be lost if the minimum wage were raised to \$15 per hour.

### 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.

- Cost of living
- Inflation
- Low-wage
- Economy
- Poverty line

### 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.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*