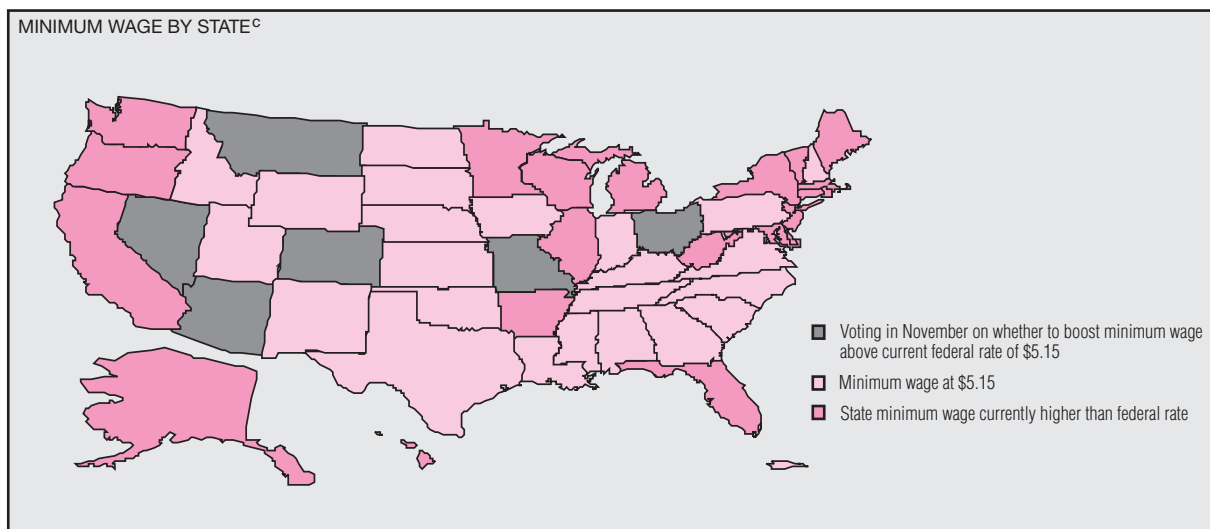
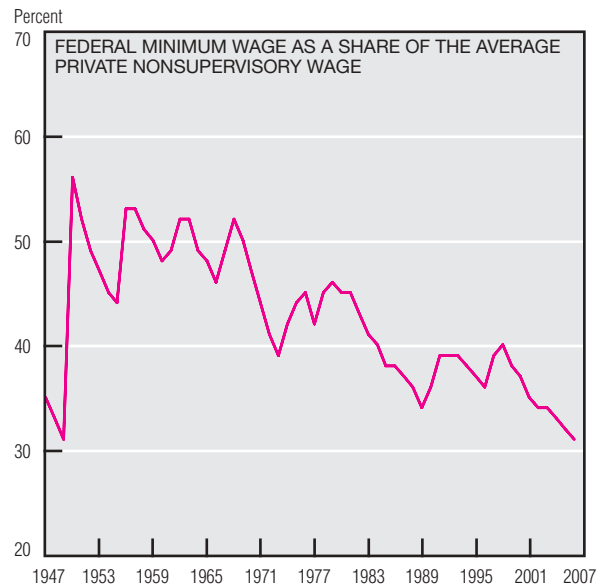
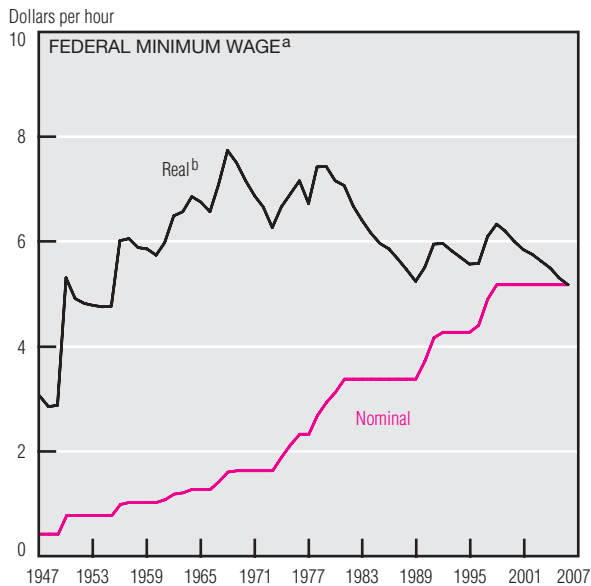


# The Minimum Wage



a. Where the minimum wage changed during the year, the annual rate is a weighted average.

b. In 2006 dollars.

c. Where federal and state law have different minimum wage rates, the higher standard applies.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration; Employment Policies Institute; Economic Policy Institute; and Stateline.org.

The federal minimum wage has remained at \$5.15 per hour since 1997. At that rate, a full-time worker would make \$10,712 per year, about \$9,000 below the poverty line for a family of four with no other family income. Adjusted for inflation, the federal minimum wage is at its lowest real value since 1955. And compared with the average wage of private non-supervisory workers, the minimum wage is at its lowest relative level in more than 50 years.

As a way around this, several states have recently raised their state minimum wage, and employers must pay the state or the federal rate, whichever is higher. This year alone, lawmakers in 11 states have raised their state's minimum wage; voters in six more states, including Ohio, will decide in the November election whether to increase their rate. There are now 21 states whose minimum wage exceeds the federal rate; in addition, North Carolina and Pennsylvania have passed legislation to go above the federal level starting in 2007.

In Ohio's case, the current proposal would raise the minimum wage to \$6.85 per hour and then index it to inflation. According to estimates from the Employment Policies Institute, more than 300,000 Ohio workers currently make between the current and the proposed minimum wage. Proponents of the hike contend that anyone who works a full-time job should earn a "living wage," while its opponents argue that an increase in the minimum wage may cause job losses.