



## **Wages and Labor**

In 1996 The Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution supporting raising the minimum wage in the United States, which was reaffirmed in 1997 and 2005. We have also advocated providing benefits including health care, job training, and child care to low wage workers.

In 1950 the Rabbinical Assembly came out in support of union negotiation rights and called for the improvement of labor-management relations in order to recognize the “inherent right of all human beings to share in the determination of their economic life.” A 1966 resolution resolved to “refrain from using alcoholic beverages at occasions of simha shel mitsvah if the grapes used have been picked under conditions where the workers are not granted the minimum protections afforded other segments of American society.” The Rabbinical Assembly recorded its “support and sympathy for the United Farm Workers in its efforts to obtain fair treatment for farm workers” in 1975 and 1987.

In 1997 the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution, which was reaffirmed in 2005, calling on American employers and multinational companies to ensure that their products are produced by workers who have adequate working conditions, sanitation, health, and safety protection who are paid a fair wage and whose human dignity is respected. At that time, the Rabbinical Assembly also called upon the US government to vigorously enforce its labor laws and to eliminate sweatshops and child labor. It called on the US government to prohibit the importation of any product found to be made through child labor.

In 2002 a Rabbinical Assembly resolution advocated for the expansion and extension of unemployment benefits and generous severance packages to employees laid off from their jobs in times of economic difficulty. The RA has recommended that in times of economic hardship and depression, the federal government should slow down implementation of tax cuts (2002); that members of Jewish institutions continue to provide tzedakah to the needy to the greatest extent possible; and that rabbis offer spiritual comfort, material assistance, networking opportunities, and a home within the community to all members regardless of economic circumstance (2009).

In relation to Heksher Tzedek, the Rabbinical Assembly in 2007 passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a nationwide effort in the United States to assure acceptable labor practices and other working conditions specifically for purveyors of kosher products. This is in keeping with previous resolutions on labor rights that we would expect all American corporations to follow.

The Rabbinical Assembly has also recognized that low wages and worker exploitation are among the “justice issues that serve as the underlying causes of modern-day slavery,” and called for the US government, local authorities, and members to address these issues at all levels in the 2013 “Resolution on Combating Human Trafficking/Modern Day Slavery.”

In 2014 the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirmed its support for “raising the minimum wage, maintaining the safety net for the poor through the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, adequate health care and other means.” It resolved to support Congressional efforts to strengthen these supports for citizens in need of economic relief.