

## Trump's Project 2025 would put over 20 million workers at risk of wage theft and lower pay

*By David Cooper, Dave Kamper, and Sebastian Martinez Hickey*

The Republican Party has long opposed raising the federal minimum wage, and [some](#) even call for its repeal. Donald Trump's Project 2025 proposes a new scheme to cut wages for the nation's lowest-paid workers: allow states to opt out of federal wage and hour laws entirely, including the federal minimum wage. Such a drastic step would put the country's lowest-paid workers at risk of wage cuts, denied raises, and lower-paying future jobs. It would also mean over 20 million workers could lose protections against wage theft and other employer abuse.

Project 2025 encourages Congress to “pass legislation allowing waivers from federal labor laws like the FLSA [Fair Labor Standards Act]” ([p. 605](#)). While the proposal makes vague references to such waivers not taking away “any current rights held by workers or employers,” the clear intent is to allow states to disregard federal labor laws they don't like.

The FLSA establishes the nation's wage and hour laws, including the minimum wage, overtime, and various other protections related to how workers are paid. The federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25 an hour since 2009. States are allowed to set a higher minimum wage than \$7.25, and [30 states](#) plus the District of Columbia have done so. In most of the states where the minimum wage is still \$7.25, Republicans control either the state legislature, the governorship, or both.

If FLSA waivers were available, there are seven states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wyoming—where a FLSA exemption would mean that the minimum wage would immediately decline. In Georgia and Wyoming, it would drop to \$5.15 an hour. In the other five states, there would be no minimum wage at all. Those states have no statutory minimum wage in state law, and companies there would be free to pay workers as low wages as they wanted—with no legal repercussions.

Given Republican control in many of the other states with state minimum wages equal to the federal \$7.25, it's no stretch to assume that many would likely seek to eliminate their state minimum wage. For instance, Republican lawmakers in New Hampshire eliminated the state-specified \$7.25 minimum wage when they took control in 2011. The state law now simply states that the federal minimum wage applies. If New Hampshire and other states with similar provisions obtained FLSA waivers, it could effectively mean no minimum wages in those places as well.

FLSA waivers would also put more workers at risk of being cheated by their employers. There are six states—Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Dakota—that defer all wage and hour law enforcement to the federal government. That means if an employer in those states does not pay workers all the money they're owed, the state [does not](#) assist workers in recovering lost wages. Workers in those states must go to the federal Department of Labor to pursue a wage theft claim under federal labor law (i.e., the FLSA.) If those states were exempted from FLSA, 20.3 million workers would be at risk of losing all government support for attempts to recover stolen wages in the event their employer cheats them out of pay.

Federal law has long been the backstop protecting pay for millions of workers in states where Republican elected leaders have failed to set higher standards or protect workers from employer abuse. Giving those same elected officials a means to opt out of federal protections puts over 20 million workers' paychecks at risk. That's a risk that workers don't need.