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## **Gov. Wolf Calls for \$2,000 Payments, Wage Increase for Pennsylvanians**

**Reading, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf was joined by Representative Patty Kim at Wesley Union A.M.E. Zion Church in Harrisburg to call on Pennsylvania’s Republican-led General Assembly to finally act to support Pennsylvanians by passing legislation for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded \$500 million PA Opportunity Program, which would send checks of up to \$2,000 to millions of Pennsylvanians.

“I first introduced this plan four months ago,” said Gov. Wolf. “A lot has changed since then, from inflation to price increases to a war in Ukraine. Pennsylvanians need our support even more today than they did in February. Under my plan, Pennsylvania households earning \$80,000 or less will get up to \$2,000, and they can use the money for whatever they need.

“This plan will help Pennsylvanians get back on their feet right now – but I also want to look ahead, to the long-term solutions that will help keep Pennsylvanians on the path to prosperity. That’s why I support raising the minimum wage for all Pennsylvanians.”

In February, Gov. Wolf unveiled a [\\$1.7 billion proposal](#) for Pennsylvania’s \$2 billion in federal ARPA dollars. While Democratic leaders in the Senate and House have introduced legislation, [Senate Bill 1619](#) and [House Bill 2531](#), to support Gov. Wolf’s PA Opportunity Program, Pennsylvania’s Republican-led General Assembly has been slow to act on committing the federal funding or introduce a plan for the dollars. With continued inaction by the legislature, the money will be sent back to the federal government by December 31, 2024.

In Gov. Wolf’s proposed PA Opportunity Program, \$500 million in ARPA dollars would provide direct payments of up to \$2,000 for Pennsylvania households with an income of \$80,000 or less. The program aims to help families still recovering economically from the COVID-19 pandemic or support them with covering pandemic-related costs and managing the current, every day increasing cost of living.

“During recent months, the cost of housing, utilities, energy, transportation and even groceries have all increased,” said Rep. Kim. “Almost all essential costs have risen across the board in Pennsylvania, except for the cost of labor. In Pennsylvania, unlike all our neighboring states, the minimum wage has not budged since 2009. This scenario all but guarantees severe and

crippling economic hardships in Pennsylvania for people earning the lowest income. We are looking at a scenario where Pennsylvania's working poor – those people working 40 or more hours a week – will still be struggling just to survive. PA needs to act. So I'm proud to join Governor Wolf in supporting the PA Opportunity Plan and a minimum wage increase, which not only supports a living wage in PA but also supports workers and households earning less than \$80,000 a year – the people most affected by this changing economy and the lasting effects of the pandemic.”

Gov. Wolf and Rep. Kim also renewed their calls for Pennsylvania's General Assembly to raise the minimum wage for all Pennsylvanians. Gov. Wolf's plan proposes raising Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$12 per hour by July 1, 2022, with a pathway to \$15 per hour by 2028. The plan will help workers and families whose pay has stayed flat while costs have increased dramatically.

“The price increases we're seeing right now are especially painful because wages haven't kept up with the rising cost of living for many years,” said Gov. Wolf. “This reality of unchanging wages and rising living costs has stretched the resources of working Pennsylvanians and their families to the limit, and with the recent dramatic price increases, beyond it. By sending ARPA dollars to Pennsylvanians and raising wages, we can help Pennsylvanians recovering from the pandemic get back on their feet and take the pressure of higher prices off of our commonwealth's families.”

According to the Keystone Research Center, if the minimum wage had kept pace with productivity growth since the late 1960s, it would be more than \$24 per hour today in Pennsylvania. The MIT Living Wage calculator shows that today, a single adult in Pennsylvania needs to earn \$16.93 per hour to support themselves. A single adult with one child needs \$32.83 per hour to support their family.

Thirty states, including all of Pennsylvania's neighbors, have a higher minimum wage than \$7.25 an hour. If the legislature were to take action to increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage, more than 618,400 women would get a direct pay increase – nearly 21% of all women working in the commonwealth.

Legislative action on Governor Wolf's proposal to raise the wage to \$15 an hour would also directly benefit:

- 31.9 percent of Hispanic workers,
- 26.3 percent of Black (non-Hispanic) workers,
- 15.7 percent Asian (non-Hispanic) workers; and
- 25.8 percent of other races/ethnicities.

Gov. Wolf supports Rep. Kim's bill – [House Bill 345](#) – to raise the wage in Pennsylvania.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Elizabeth Rementer, [ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov](mailto:ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov), 717-783-1116

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