

Work should pay better than welfare

By: Erin DeRosa – February 15, 2013

What's in a number?

Did you know that a full-time worker making a minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour is paid \$14,500 a year?

Did you know that to raise a family of four above the poverty line it takes an annual salary of \$23,550?

That is a sobering number considering so many of the so-called "lazy" people on welfare and using food stamps are actually working, full time to boot or at least just close enough so that their employers don't have to offer them health care.

Here is another interesting fact, according to figures from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Commerce and the Cato Institute: There are 40 states in the U.S. where welfare pays better than minimum wage.

Welfare pays more than the average salary of a U.S. teacher in nine states — nine! That almost seems unacceptable to me.

Here is the thing. The total number of Americans on welfare is 4.3 million. I kind of get why that may be happening.

The cost of living goes up weekly, it seems. Add gas for your car and that number can fluctuate daily.

Yet people's pay isn't. Unless, of course, you are part of the teeny tiny percentage enjoying record corporate profits. The profits your hard work is producing. The same profits not being shared.

When life keeps getting more and more expensive, and believe me I know this all too well, it is hard to fill the refrigerator.

Which gets me to my next number. The number of Americans receiving food stamps — you know the ones that actually help kids eat — is 46.7 million! You read that right.

In a country where corporations are reporting record profits, people are having the hardest time just feeding their families. There is something so very wrong with that.

Raising the minimum wage should be something that is adjusted annually. Just like the price of gas makes us adjust our travels, so too should the hardest working Americans receive compensation.

Raise a person's pay and watch simple math and economics happen right before your eyes.

I am tired of people looking down on the families on the lowest rungs of our society. What is wrong here in America?

The top 1 percent of households by income captured 121 percent of all income gains between 2009 and 2011. The other 99 percent?

They got poorer.

What President Obama said during his State of the Union address Tuesday seems impossible to disagree with: "Let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on earth, no one who works full time should have to live in poverty."

Makes sense to me.