BEST AND WORST STATES TO WORK IN AMERICA 2022

For the last five years, Oxfam has produced the Best States to Work Index (BSWI), which tracks how states pay, protect, support, and workers. The index highlights the urgent need for federal and state policies in support of workers.

The 2022 BSWI tracks 26 policies across all 50 states plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico, ranking the states from best (1) to worst (52). The policies fall into three dimensions which help improve the lives of workers and working families: wages, worker protections, and rights to organize.

No policy tracked in the BSWI has a federal mandate, so all present an opportunity for the federal and state governments to step up and adopt new policies across all three dimensions.

WAGES

Oxfam calls on policymakers to RAISE THE WAGE. At all levels, subminimum tipped wages should be abolished, minimum wage exclusions of certain workers must end, and the minimum wage needs to be lifted.

• At the federal level, there is a piece of legislation ready to implement all these policies: the Raise the Wage Act. It would raise the federal minimum wage to $15 by 2025; begin automatic, indexed wage increases in 2025; and gradually eliminate subminimum wages for tipped workers, workers with disabilities, and youth.

• Given the extreme cost of care for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities in the United States, and the burden these costs place on already insufficient wages, there is a serious need for federal investment in the care economy. There are bills before Congress that could help address the financial burden of caregiving, while raising wages for child care workers:

  • The Child Care for Working Families Act would provide low- and middle-income families with affordable child care (ensuring no family receiving assistance pays more than 7 percent of its household income on child care) and guarantee child care workers a living wage.

  • The Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act calls for $700 billion to establish a universal child care system, while also investing in child care workers.

WORKER PROTECTIONS

There is a great need for stronger worker protections at the state and federal levels, including paid family and medical leave, stronger equal pay laws, pregnancy accommodations, and protections for domestic workers. There are bills available for the federal government to adopt and improve the worker protection landscape for all workers in the US.

PAID LEAVE: Congress should provide paid sick and family leave for all workers. There are several bills Congress can pass to establish federal paid leave standards, including:

• The FAMILY Act, which provides up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for reasons ranging from medical issues to childbirth, or to support care responsibilities.

• The Healthy Families Act, which guarantees up to seven paid sick days a year for short-term illness, preventive care, caring for a sick family member, or seeking assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

• The Building an Economy for Families Act, which provides paid family and medical leave while permanently extending the American Rescue Plan’s Child Tax Credit (CTC).
**EQUAL PAY:** The Paycheck Fairness Act aims to close the gender wage gap by strengthening the Equal Pay Act, including limiting employers’ reliance on an applicant’s salary history, protecting workers from retaliation for discussing their wages, and requiring employers to prove that pay disparities are not solely related to gender.

**PREGNANCY ACCOMMODATIONS:** The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act would prohibit discrimination for “qualified employees affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions” and require reasonable accommodations. Congress should also pass the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act, which expands workplace breastfeeding protections.

**PROTECTIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS:** The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights extends pay and leave rights to domestic workers while mandating health and safety precautions, including language around fair and fixed scheduling.

**HEAT PROTECTION STANDARDS:** As temperatures and heat-related worker deaths continue to climb, a set of federal protections all workers is essential. OSHA intends to issue a new regulation protecting indoor and outdoor workers from heat, but the rulemaking process takes time, and future administrations can change these rules. Congress should pass the Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act to ensure these protections are strong.

**RIGHTS TO ORGANIZE**

The federal government must enshrine the rights of workers to build power collectively. At the state level, the prevalence of “right-to-work” laws demonstrates the systematic approach to undermining worker power and the clear need for the federal government to protect workers’ rights to organize. To that end, the federal government has one crucial piece of legislation to pass:

- The Protecting Rights to Organize (‘PRO’) Act, a bill that expands the protections around workers’ rights to bargain and organize as a collective.

**BEST STATES TO WORK INDEX ONLINE**

- The report is here: [www.oxfamamerica.org/statereport2022](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/statereport2022)
- The interactive map for all workers is here: [www.oxfamamerica.org/statemap2022](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/statemap2022)
- The interactive map for working women is here: [www.oxfamamerica.org/statewomenmap2022](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/statewomenmap2022)

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