

## Introduction to Two Articles on the Living Wage

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In this issue's Perspectives section, I am most pleased to present two articles on the struggle to obtain the living wage in the United States. Characterized as a wage based on an estimation of the official poverty threshold for a family of four, the living wage hinges on the idea that people employed at full-time jobs, and their families, should not have to live in poverty. While the fight to achieve a living wage is historically related to the struggle to implement minimum wage laws in the first few decades of the 20th century, the present-day living wage movement obtained its first success in 1994 with the passage of a living wage statute in Baltimore.

In the first article entitled "The Significance of the Living Wage for US Workers in the Early Twenty-First Century," I discuss the advent and growth of US living wage campaigns, the coverage and provisions of living wage ordinances, the economic impact of living wage statutes as well as supplementary benefits afforded to workers and unions from the passage of living wage ordinances. In the second piece entitled, "The Harvard Living Wage Campaign: Origins and Strategy," Dr. Amy C. Offner, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, and a former editor at *Dollars & Sense* as well as a former organizer for the Service Employees International Union, provides an extremely interesting and smartly-written account of the successful living wage campaign conducted at Harvard University (1998–2002) from the viewpoint of a leading participant.

If any of the readers of the *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* are interested in commenting on the articles published in the Perspectives section, please do not hesitate to contact me. Additionally, I welcome articles and essays from the journal's readers on a wide variety of topic in employee relations. I hope that you enjoy these two articles and find them most illuminating.

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