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Where's our \$15 minimum wage?

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On March 11, President Joe Biden signed a “historic” relief bill for the U.S. population. This bill’s goal was allegedly to soften the social and economic blow dealt to working people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law by Biden totaled \$1.9 trillion. Included were much-needed payments of \$1,400 to many working-class people, weekly payments of \$300 (down from \$600) added to unemployment benefits until September, and supplemental payments for dependent children.

While the stimulus checks were welcome, the CARES Act fell woefully short on many fronts. The most noticeable absence from the stimulus package was the mandatory federal \$15-an-hour minimum wage that Biden promised on the campaign trail.

Politicians often talk about the importance of “bipartisanship.” Here was a rare display of it, but not for the better: [Eight Democratic senators](#) joined 50 Republicans in voting down a \$15 minimum wage amendment proposed by progressive Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

The failure to pass a \$15 federal minimum wage will disproportionately affect the Black community in the South, particularly Black women. Among minimum-wage workers, Black women are disproportionately represented. Many live in Southern states that are among the least likely to enact a state minimum wage raise. Ironically, it was [Black women in the South](#) whose support allowed Joe Biden to become president.

Further diluting the positive effects of the relief, the legislation failed to provide protections against debt collectors seeking to seize stimulus checks. Any private debt collector that has a judgement against an individual can directly garnish their stimulus payment.

There is something appalling about a group of millionaire politicians telling working people they claim to champion that they don’t deserve a pay raise or protections from legal loan sharks amidst a historic pandemic.

Band aid on a broken system

President Biden promised a federal minimum wage raise, \$2,000 stimulus payments and other relief for the working class during his campaign. So far he hasn't followed through.

Biden caved on the [minimum wage](#). Biden caved on [\\$2,000 payments](#). Biden caved on [protections against debt collectors](#).

Biden's actions make it clear he has no intention of following through his campaign promises to the communities, mostly Black and Brown people, that made his election a reality.

There's little doubt that Biden fancies himself the reincarnation of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who implemented the New Deal programs during the Great Depression. In more ways than one, FDR was no friend of the worker or communities of color. It is important we are clear on that.

However, when compared to the [New Deal's sweeping programs](#) that lifted millions of workers and farmers from abject poverty in order to save the capitalist system, Biden's pittance plans seem [weak at best](#).

The CARES Act did provide a small level of relief for millions in the U.S. However, more than anything, this relief package serves as an infinitesimally small band aid on a broken system. The last thing working and oppressed people in this country need are more half measures.

When the people demanded a \$15 minimum wage, they meant it. When the people demanded Medicare for all, they meant it. When the people demanded total forgiveness of crushing student debt, they meant it.

The working-class struggle must continue to make these demands in the face of the

Biden administration's attempts to frame things as "back to normal." If "normal" means racist police terror, low wages and a bloated military budget, then we want no part of it.

Instead, we must continue to fight for worker power and a [true people's mandate](#).

