

NEWS ADVISORY
Aug 28, 2000

CONTACT: Nan Madden (651) 642-1904 ext. 30 or
Lisa Jordan (612) 626-2034

New Labor Day report finds many Minnesota workers falling behind

A new Labor Day report looks behind commonly reported statistics to see who's winning and losing in Minnesota's current economy. *Making a Living? The State of Working Minnesota, Labor Day 2000* finds that, although the state is enjoying strong economic growth and all levels of the workforce have seen some wage gains, many working people are falling behind.

An executive summary of the report accompanies this advisory. A full copy will follow.

Nan Madden, director of the Minnesota Budget Project, authored the study, with assistance from Molly Moilanen and Lisa Jordan of the Labor Education Service of the University of Minnesota.

Madden said, "The analysis in this report goes beyond statewide averages and separates the population into groups based on family income or wages. This allowed us to identify which struggles are common to all workers, such as balancing family and work responsibilities, and those which fall more heavily on low- and moderate-income workers, like purchasing a home."

Jordan, a labor economist, commented on information in the report that, while Minnesota ranks 10th in the nation in the percentage of the workforce who are union members and union membership in the state is growing, the percentage of Minnesota workers who belong to unions has declined since the 1980s. "When union density declines, inequality grows," Jordan said. "It takes union power to narrow the wage and wealth gap between average working people and the wealthy."

Marcie Jefferys, fiscal policy director of the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, who assisted in the report's preparation said, "More parents working more hours has helped fuel the state's strong economy. But, most employers are not helping parents meet the challenges caused by the additional time away from home that work now takes. Employers, employees and public policy makers should join together to come up with solutions to make sure children are not the losers in this economy."

Publication of *Making a Living? The State of Working Minnesota, Labor Day 2000* was made possible through funding and in-kind services from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) of the University of Minnesota, the Ford Foundation, the Labor Education Service of the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota AFL-CIO and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. Other organizational sponsors include the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, JOBS NOW Coalition and the Minnesota Farmers Union.

For comment on the report from representatives of sponsoring organizations, please call:

- Bernard Brommer, Minnesota AFL-CIO, (651) 227-7647
- John Bowman, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, (612) 348-7284
- Marcie Jefferys, Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, (651) 227-6121
- Pete Takash, Minnesota Farmers' Union, (651) 639-1223
- Kris Jacobs, JOBS NOW Coalition, (651) 290-0240.