



Opening Statement
Ranking Member Frederica S. Wilson
Workforce Protections Subcommittee Hearing
"Examining the Costs and Consequences of the Administration's Overtime Proposal"
Thursday, July 23, 2015

Chairman Walberg, thank you for holding this hearing today and giving us the opportunity to talk about the Department of Labor's proposed overtime rule.

As a prelude to the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act, President Roosevelt made a powerful declaration –all Americans deserve a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. This simple, powerful principle is the foundation of the historic labor law that we, as members of Workforce Protections Subcommittee, are charged with strengthening and defending.

Implicit in this principle is the freedom from excessive work hours. Explicit in FLSA is premium pay for overtime work.

Overtime pay was established to protect workers from the excessive hours that endanger their health and well-being, prevent them from spending time with their families, and all but prohibit them from taking the necessary time to recover from the stresses of work.

Unfortunately, the failure to update the overtime salary threshold to reflect the economic realities of today has seriously eroded FLSA's protection against excessive hours and its implicit promise of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Forty years ago, nearly two-thirds of the workforce was eligible for overtime protections. Today, only 8 percent of workers are eligible for overtime protections. We cannot possibly argue that these current working conditions for millions of Americans are *fair*.

It's not *fair* that the men and women teetering on the brink of poverty, people making \$23,660 a year, are asked to work 50, 60, or 70 hours a week with no promise of extra pay.

It's not *fair* that millions of mothers and fathers who are forced to work long hours each week find it almost impossible to give their children the time and attention they deserve, yet are still deprived of the overtime pay that could lend to the economic security of their families.

It's not *fair* that a worker eager to advance her career can be enticed by the promise of a promotion—a salaried position with a management title—yet be met with astonishingly similar work duties, shockingly greater hours, and in the end, pitifully smaller pay.

The Department of Labor's proposed rule promises to restore a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

The proposed rule would raise the salary threshold from the current \$23,660 a year to about \$50,440 a year, extending overtime protections to almost 5 million Americans. The rule also ensures that the salary threshold automatically increases to keep pace with future shifts in average earnings.

These strengthened overtime protections would mean so much in the daily lives of millions of Americans. This overtime rule would allow more parents to be involved in their children's lives; something we know is absolutely critical for the development and betterment of our children. This overtime rule would encourage employers to hire more workers, instead of overworking a few, meaning more jobs for more Americans. The overtime rule would give part-time workers access to more hours that would help them earn more money.

I stand strong with my colleagues on this Committee in support of this overtime rule. I stand strong with the more than 150 House and Senate Democrats who sent a letter to President Obama this week to express our strong support of this overtime rule.

I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing about how this proposed rule strengthens overtime protections and renews the promise of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Thank you.