

## Media Release

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### Recession crowds Colorado's Job Market Report Finds Living Wage Jobs in Short Supply

Grassroots organizations across the country call for action from Denver and D.C.

\*\*\*This year's report has data for all counties in Colorado\*\*\*

**Denver:** For every 15 job seekers, there is only one job opening that will pay the \$29.71 needed to support single parent with two children. Of all job openings in the state, less than one third offer a wage that could support a family. This, according to a new study out today entitled *The 2009 Job Gap: Searching for Work that Pays*, compiled by the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. The report also finds that in 2009, job-seekers in Colorado have spiked by over fifty percent.

"This report puts the struggles of job-seekers into clear focus, and points to the growing need for lawmakers in Denver and D.C. to take action to ensure that all Coloradans can find work that pays," Ben Hanna of the Colorado Progressive Coalition.

The *2009 Job Gap* calculates a living wage for a variety of family sizes, and then measures how many job openings in Colorado pay that wage. A living wage is a wage that allows individuals and families to meet their basic needs without public assistance and provides them some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead. Living wage data is available for all counties in Colorado.

The report also looks at the availability of living wage jobs, and compares them to the number of job seekers. The findings show a crowded job market for Coloradans. Only two out of every five job openings in Colorado pay a living wage for an individual. And there are four job seekers for every job that pays this wage. For families, the situation is more difficult, with 9 - 15 job seekers for every job opening that pays a wage that would support a family.

These numbers from 2008 reflect the beginnings of the recession. For this year, however, job-seekers are up from 205,000 to 321,000. For those people, the recession has seriously threatened their financial security.

"I've been on the job market for over a year since I got laid off; it's very discouraging. Our family has made sacrifices to save money, but at some point, there's nothing more to give up," says Marilyn Stewart resident of Colorado who is looking for a job in real estate.

According to the report, reduced family income has caused a surge in Coloradans participating in the food stamp program. Between July 2008, and June 2009, enrollment in the program grew by 36 percent. A recent USDA report found that food insecurity in the U.S. is at record highs.

Organizations releasing the report suggest several solutions, including the creation of a federal jobs creation program, and increased fiscal relief for states to shore up budget shortfalls. The House has signaled that they will be moving legislation in December to create more jobs, and the White House is holding a Jobs Summit on December 3.

“For the big banks and Wall Street financiers who caused this economic collapse, the recession is over,” according to Reverend Daniel Klawitter from FRESC. “But for ordinary workers, there is a long road ahead. We’re calling on both the President and Congress to enact legislation that would create living wage jobs for the millions currently being left out from our economic recovery.”

“We’re joining community groups across the country and in D.C. today to create a community jobs program that would put 2.5 million people to work in jobs in our communities,” said Ben Hanna from the Colorado Progressive Coalition. “These jobs would be real jobs with living wages that put people to work improving our communities.”

Organizations also called for better job standards in Colorado, and for businesses not to lower wages despite a drop in Colorado’s minimum wage.

“During this difficult time, businesses in our state should also be helping to support working families,” said Lorena Garcia from 9to5, National Association of Working Women. “This drop in the minimum wage, while modest, is a step in the wrong direction for Colorado, and economic recovery. We’re urging all Colorado businesses to strive towards living wages for their employees.”

Colorado’s minimum wage for non-tipped workers is scheduled to drop by \$.03 in January 2010. The minimum wage for tipped workers will also drop by a few cents.

Organizations releasing the report also point to passing health care reform as a key way to relieve pressure on family budgets, and make it easier for businesses to provide a living wage.

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