

Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions

MINIMUM WAGE PROGRAM

PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

1. Objectives

The purpose of the program of the Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions (WHPC) is to alleviate sub-standard working conditions as prescribed by the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act, and the Service Contract Act of 1965.¹ These statutes are directed towards elimination of sub-minimum wages, excessive hours, discrimination in rates of pay among men and women doing equal work, unsafe or hazardous employment conditions, the use of child labor, and other conditions which are detrimental to the maintenance of a minimum standard of living necessary for the health, efficiency and general well-being of workers.

In accordance with their responsibilities under the above Acts, the WHPC Divisions seek to—

- a. Obtain through education and investigation, compliance with standards respecting wages, hours, child labor, and other conditions of employment regulated by statute.
- b. Plan and conduct economic research and analyses of the wage, hour and other provisions of the Acts it administers and make recommendations for further legislation in connection with matters covered by the Acts.
- c. Provide for the employment of learners, apprentices, full-time students and handicapped workers at special minimum wages authorized by certificate to prevent curtailment of employment opportunities.
- d. Enforce statutory provisions relating to the age and occupations in which minors may be employed.

2. Operation

A major part of the bureau's program involves investigations for compliance which are carried out in regional and field offices with national office supervision. In addition to providing supervision and administrative support, the national office fulfills a major role involving economic research and analysis and regulation and wage determination activities.

3. History

Cornerstone of the program is the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 which for the first time provided national minimum wage and maximum hours standards and prohibited oppressive child labor. Effective October 24, 1938 the Act required payment to employees engaged in interstate commerce or the production of goods for interstate commerce a minimum wage of 25¢ per hour and overtime wages at time and one-half the regular rate of pay for hours of work in excess of 44 per week. The original legislation provided for increase of the minimum wage to 40¢ per hour and reduction of the weekly

¹ Also, all responsibilities of the Secretary of Labor as provided in Section 5(j) of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965. This statute establishes minimum wage standards applicable to all professional performers and related or supporting professional personnel employed on projects or productions financed in whole or in part through grants of funds under the Act and provides that such projects and productions must be performed under safe and sanitary conditions.