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Republicans for Family Values

John McCarthy | Feb. 20, 2013 NCR Today

For some reason, for better or for worse, Republicans have become the poster-child of ?Family Values.? Almost two decades after the Reagan Presidency, Republican campaign rhetoric is still a constant replay of ?Morning in America.? White Moms and White Dads sending their perfectly dressed children to school, where they learn about Jesus, a hard-days-work, and proverbial bootstrap pulling. Boy, oh Boy! This is the Judeo-Christian nation that hard working white patriots gave their lives for?and at the core of this nation is One Father, one mother, one son and one daughter (and if they?ve achieved the American Dream, maybe even a Golden Retriever).

Yet what we seem to forget is that this ?Morning in America,? was never a reality. Families come in different shapes and sizes. They have problems, find solutions, and are working together to make ends meet. We?ve let Republicans act as though they speak for ?Family Values,? without having to speak for the reality of American families today--and as people of faith we should admit that enough is enough.

Hard-working Americans are putting in full-time hours at minimum wage and earning a mere $15,000 a year. Whether you?re a parent trying to make ends meet, or a recent graduate trying to build a career: hard work equals less and less each year, and the minimum wage is no longer a living wage.

If people are scraping by paycheck-to-paycheck they lack the wherewithal to be fully participatory members of society. From an economic standpoint, they perpetually lack the resources to put revenue back into the marketplace because so little is left after all the bills are paid. These social and monetary constraints are putting an immense amount of stress on the future of the American family.

Studies continue to show that one of the leading causes for divorce is financial problems. Couples sitting across the kitchen table are left in a constant state of tension as they try to find some more room in the family budget. If Republicans want to get serious about keeping couples together, let?s make sure that families avoid the financial choices that have been driving them apart.

The current federal minimum wage is only $7.25 an hour?roughly $15,000 a year, or $7,000 below the Federal poverty line for a family of four. Yet over the last 30 years, CEO pay has risen over 725% and all 80% of real income growth has gone to the top one percent of wealthy-America. Minimum wage job-holders are older and more educated than ever before, debunking the myth that these jobs are held by the young or lazy.

These jobs are held by mothers, fathers, and grandparents who are perpetually playing catch-up in an economy that has left them behind. They're the "least of these" among us, and raising the minimum wage to $9.80\ would lift over 28 million of them out of Poverty, making family life just a little bit easier.

This is not a hand-out, but rather an opportunity to live out the values of our faith and our country: that hard, honest work should be rewarded, and that we do best when we are all doing well. Republicans have the

opportunity to live up to the identity they?ve been holding onto for all these years. Let?s pray that both Democrats and Republicans will come together and do not only what?s best for our economy, but what?s best for American families.

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