

### **Valuing Hard Work**

As the son of a hardrock miner, I know the value of hard work. I also appreciate the sacrifices that millions of American workers make every day as they strive to build a better life for their families.

In the richest nation on earth, every American who wants to work should be able to find work; the rights of workers should be respected on the job; and workers should receive fair wages for their hard work.

### **Creating Good Jobs**

It has been too hard for Americans to find good jobs during the past three years. We need to support programs that create jobs, including investments in infrastructure projects that are already needed. For every \$1 billion that the government spends on highways, airports, sewage systems, and ports, we create more than 47,000 new, high-wage jobs.

As a senior member of the Senate Appropriations and Environment and Public Works committees, I work to ensure that Nevada gets its fair share of these job-creating investments. I am a principal author of a new, bipartisan six-year transportation bill that will bring millions of dollars in new federal funds to Nevada – reducing congestion, providing more transit choices, and boosting our economy.

To help Nevadans find employment opportunities, I have created a resource on my website that provides information about jobs across the state of Nevada. You can even search by region and type of job. The resource is located at <http://reid.senate.gov/resources/unemployed.cfm>.

### **Keeping Jobs in the USA**

American workers can compete with anybody if we give them a level playing field. But we are losing good jobs to other countries every day, in part because of unbalanced, unfair trade agreements.

That's why I have consistently opposed trade agreements such as NAFTA that erode the jobs base in this country and fail to include adequate labor standards.

Many countries lack basic protections for workers, including minimum wage and child labor laws. Foreign employers also often do not have to comply with health and safety regulations designed to protect workers from injury, exploitation, and abuse. This creates an uneven playing field and puts American workers at an unfair disadvantage.

Many companies also ship jobs overseas because they actually receive a tax incentive to do so. I have been working to eliminate those tax loopholes and instead have supported providing companies with positive incentives to keep jobs here in America.

### **Raising the Minimum Wage**

A person who works hard every day shouldn't live in poverty. That's why I support legislation (S. 224) to increase the minimum wage by \$1.50 an hour.

The current minimum wage has been set at \$5.15 per hour since 1997. That means a person who works full-time at minimum wage earns \$206 a week before taxes, or \$10,712 a year. Over time, inflation has steadily eroded the purchasing power of the minimum wage, so that it is now 25 percent lower than it was in 1979. If we want to reward hard work, we must raise the minimum wage, and I'll keep fighting to do so.

### **Protecting Overtime Rights**

As you may know, the Department of Labor (DOL) proposed a regulation last year to eliminate overtime pay for eight million workers currently covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

This landmark labor law states that employees are entitled to "time and a half" pay for every hour worked above 40 hours in a week. The law provides a narrow exception for employees in "executive," "administrative," or "professional" positions. The DOL's proposal would reclassify eight million more workers as "executive," "administrative," or "professional," including nurses, firefighters, police officers, flight attendants, preschool teachers, paralegals, sales representatives, and loan officers.

Overtime pay guarantees that employees are rewarded for the extra hours they work, and working families depend on the overtime pay they earn. That is why I have supported Senator Tom Harkin's (D-IA) fight to block this proposed rule. I regret that the Bush Administration has continued to move forward in implementing this rule. I'll keep fighting to protect the rights of working Americans to receive overtime pay - just as they have for decades.

### **Safeguarding Workers' Rights**

Americans workers fuel the most powerful economic engine in the world, and their rights and protections should reflect their tremendous contributions to our national welfare and security.

I support the right of workers to bargain collectively, and I appreciate the important role that labor unions have played in building and strengthening the American middle class.

I also have been a leader in the fight to ensure that workers on federal projects receive locally prevailing wages under the Davis-Bacon Act. This law has ensured that important projects such as highways and schools are built by highly skilled workers, and that they earn good wages. This past year I offered successful amendments to apply Davis-Bacon wage protections to water and wastewater projects.

It is very important that we keep the American workplace safe and productive. I remember going into the mines with my father, where I saw firsthand the importance of adequate health and safety standards. It is critical that we continue to keep American workers healthy, safe, and productive.

**For more information visit my Web-Site at <http://reid.senate.gov>**