

For Release: August 31, 2018

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**\*Interview opportunity: Authors will be available for interview on Monday, September 3 from 1- 2pm at Labor Fest at the Labor Temple in Madison.\***

### **COWS Releases the State of Working Wisconsin 2018 for Labor Day**

Read full report at <https://www.cows.org/soww>.

Today COWS released the *State of Working Wisconsin 2018*, their biannual report that addresses some of the most critical issues facing workers in this state. So how are workers faring? Wisconsin's economy, at least in employment and family income, has finally and meaningfully recovered from the Great Recession that began a decade ago. This is very welcome news for working Wisconsinites. However, this good news is not untarnished.

#### **Wisconsin's Job Growth Consistently Slower than National**

Although Wisconsin's job base has grown, the rate of growth remains slow compared to the national rate. From January 2011 to March 2018, Wisconsin added 233,300 jobs. If Wisconsin's job growth matched the national rate, we would have added 364,000 jobs. Wisconsin is missing some 130,700 jobs.

#### **Growth Concentrated in Urban Areas**

Since 2000, Wisconsin's urban counties have added 94,700 jobs. Over the same period, rural counties lost 9,500. The urban workforce is growing, diversifying, and becoming more educated. Rural areas face job loss, loss of younger workers, and an aging population.

#### **Wisconsin: A Hard Working State**

Every demographic of Wisconsin residents participates in the labor force at higher rates than their national counterparts; the overall Wisconsin labor force participation rate is 69%: more than 6 percentage points higher than the national rate.

#### **Wage Stagnation: Annual Growth under \$0.03 per hour**

Taking inflation into account, the state's 2017 median hourly wage, \$18.34, exceeds the 1979 median by just one dollar per hour. That translates to an average annual raise of less than 3 cents per hour, despite the fact that today's typical worker is more productive, being both substantially more educated and working with better technology than in 1979.

### **Wage Inequality Persistent**

The gap between women and men has been shrinking, but slowly, and women in Wisconsin make 84 cents for every dollar men make. The median black worker brings home \$16.10 per hour, 19 percent less than the white median. Earning \$13.48 per hour, the Hispanic worker lags behind the white median by 43 percent.

The state's median worker who has a high school degree earns \$11 per hour less than the median worker with a four-year college degree or more (\$15.23 compared to \$26.39). Associates degrees (usually from WTCS) bring wages up to around \$18 per hour.

### **Poverty-Wages in Wisconsin**

More than 675,000 Wisconsin workers, or roughly one of every five workers in the state, earn wages below \$11.95 per hour. The median age of a poverty-wage worker in Wisconsin is 29 years.

White women are twice as likely to earn poverty wages as white men: 11.6 percent of white men compared 19.8 percent of white women. One-in-five Black men and nearly two-in-five Black women earn poverty wages.

### **Union Representation in Decline**

Since Act 10 was passed, Wisconsin's public sector unionization rate has plummeted from over 50 percent to 19 percent.

"Wisconsin workers finally have some good news to celebrate this Labor Day. But the state of Wisconsin could do much better for its working families. It will need to if we're ever to reclaim the shared high quality of life together that was once Wisconsin's hallmark," said Joel Rogers, Director of COWS and co-author of the report.

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### **About the State of Working Wisconsin 2018**

For more than two decades now, annually, on Labor Day, COWS reports on how working people are faring in the state. [The State of Working Wisconsin](#), released biannually on even-numbered years since 1996, is our long-form report, and looks at the economy comprehensively from a working-family perspective. In odd-numbered years, also biannually, we provide a more abbreviated and focused report, called [The State of Working Wisconsin: Facts & Figures](#). In this year's report, we provide our overview of some of the most critical issues facing working people in the state.

### **About COWS**

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS is a national think-and-do tank that promotes "high road" solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.