

## **PERSONAL FINANCE**

### **This is how many full-time jobs a minimum wage worker needs to afford an apartment**

*“Our rental housing needs have worsened considerably over the past 30 years, leaving housing out of reach for millions of low-wage workers.”*

LADDERS, CW Headley, cheadley@theladders.com | JUNE 24, 2019

America’s minimum wage system isn’t really working. The hard truth is, even with the recent increase issued by The Raise The Wage Act of 2017, the current rate doesn’t effectively cover the rent anywhere in the US. To rent a modest one bedroom apartment in this country a person would need to earn a minimum of \$17.90 an hour, and \$22.10 an hour to secure a two bedroom apartment. These figures come courtesy of the annual report published by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

The federal government mandated a national minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, has been officially succeeded by 29 states in America. Unfortunately, these rates rarely proffer stable incomes for low wage earners in the U.S, as The NLHC reports that it would actually take more than three times the federal minimum wage to meet the national housing wage for a two bedroom apartment.

#### **The national housing crisis**

The National Low Income Housing Coalition has been surveying minimum wage and housing costs for nearly three decades now.

“Our rental housing needs have worsened considerably over the past 30 years, leaving housing out of reach for millions of low-wage workers,” said Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition in a press statement.

Last year’s report went on to reveal that there are only five states wherein minimum wage employees can afford a one bedroom apartment: Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington, all of which employ rates that exceed the federal minimum of \$7.25. The rest of the country doesn’t fare as successfully, as millions of minimum wage workers are being forced out of their apartments by rising housing costs instated all across the nation.

More than 11 million families dedicate more than half of their small incomes to rent and utilities. Most housing advocates suggest spending no more than 30% of your income on housing to avoid succumbing to debt.

“Clearly the country is in the grip of a pervasive affordable housing crisis affecting rural, urban and suburban communities alike,” she said.

The Coalition’s newest report, which was published just this past Tuesday offers a sobering insight into the impractical standards placed on low-income earners. In order to afford a two-bedroom apartment, a Florida minimum wage worker earning \$8.46 a week would have to work 108 hours a week or take on nearly three full-time jobs. Mind you, the average two-bedroom apartment in Florida is about \$1, 133 a month.

The Tampa Bay Times, recently covered the Coalition’s latest release, highlighting the tragedy of the failed system by detailing the experiences of several local low wage earners.

First there was Ashley East, a 33-year-old single mother of three that makes \$10 an hour as a housekeeper. She and her three children are forced to share a two bedroom apartment with East’s mother, as a more suitable living situation is beyond her grasp on her current wage, and a second job would certainly mean even less time with her young children. Or take Jeffrey Jones, a cancer-stricken man that is forced to sleep on a concrete floor every night because his wage has made it impossible to secure proper housing. Currently, Jones is one of the nearly 1,800 people awaiting section 8 housing from the **Tampa Housing Authority**, alongside the 22,000 denizens awaiting subsidized housing.