This statement of support and repost of our press release was posted Friday August 24th on the home page of the Wichita Hutchinson Labor Federation. This organization represents 30,000 union workers in South Central Kansas.

Source: http://www.whlaborfed.org/

Protest Goodwill’s Sub-minimum Wages.

Written on August 24, 2012 by jakelowen in Action Alerts

The Wichita / Hutchinson Labor Federation believes that all workers deserve fair wages and equal treatment under the law. Workers with disabilities are no exception. We encourage all working families to stand with the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas to protest the Goodwill and their practice of denying disabled workshop employees minimum wage. Read NFIB-KS’s statement below and please help raise awareness of this important issues. You can learn more about the national campaign here: www.nfb.org/fair-wages

The South Central Kansas press release was pasted below this statement.

The following article appeared on the Wichita Business Journal web site on Friday August 24th

Source: http://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/blog/2012/08/national-federation-of-the-blind-to.html

National Federation of the Blind to protest Goodwill of Kansas wage practices

Wichita Business Journal by Emily Behlmann, Web producer

Date: Friday, August 24, 2012, 2:58pm CDT



[photo caption: The Goodwill logo, Goodwill Industries of Kansas employs 495 people. Some are day-services clients who are paid a "piece rate" that amounts to less than minimum wage.]

The National Federation of the Blind of Kansas is planning a protest from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday outside Goodwill Industries of Kansas’ store at 5525 W. Central in Wichita.

According to a news release from the National Federation of the Blind, the goal of the protest is to raise awareness of Goodwill wage practices that sometimes involve paying workers at less than minimum wage. In the news release, the federation described the practice as “unfair, discriminatory and immoral.”

However, Goodwill leaders say the employees who fall in this situation are actually clients.

“They are people who are receiving day services with us,” says Gayle Goetz, vice president of career services for Goodwill Industries of Kansas. “They’re getting life skills training, work skills and vocational training.”

Goetz says Goodwill Industries of Kansas employs 495 people, full- and part-time. About 42 percent of them have at least one disability or “significant barrier to employment,” and a majority — including all retail employees — make at least minimum wage, she says.

However, about 12 percent of employees have severe disabilities and work on contracts cutting and packaging rags. They’re paid a “piece rate” per item they complete. She says the piece rate is determined based on the prevailing wage a person without a disability might receive for similar work.

The result is that some highly productive piece-rate employees make more than minimum wage, while many make less. Goetz says she’s glad Goodwill is able to hire these individuals because, she says, they want to work but it would be very difficult for them to find employment anywhere else.

The piece-rate practice is allowed under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and Tom Page, first vice president of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas, says that's really his organization's broader concern. He says the federation is pushing to eliminate the provision, and that a bill that would do so, H.R. 3086, is accumulating sponsors. A Library of Congress bill summary lists 81 sponsors so far.

Video a on KSN-TVite on Saturday August 25th the video ran on the south central Kansas NBC and FOX affiliates at 5:30pm, 10:00pm, and 9:00pm respectively. They did not choose to post this video clip on their web site. We are in the process of acquiring a DVD.

The following text appeared on the KAKE-TV web site on Saturday August 25th. The video ran at 6:00pm an 10:00pm on the south central Kansas ABC affiliate.

Source: http://www.kake.com/home/headlines/Kansans-participate-in-national-protest-of-Goodwills-wages-for-people-with-disabilities-167452395.html

Video Link: same as above.

Kansans Join National Protest Against Goodwill

Organizers say Goodwill doesn't pay a fair wage to its disabled employees.

Reporter: Jason Tarr

Email Address: jason.tarr@kake.com

Saturday, August 25, 2012

Each a time a car passed him Saturday, it was an opportunity for National Federation of the Blind of Kansas' Leonard Silkey Jr. to get his message seen.

"It is a matter of self-respect even to the mentally challenged that they are paid a wage that says your work is worth something," said Silkey Jr., president of the organization's South Central Kansas chapter.

It's a message close to his heart. About eight years ago, Silkey Jr. worked alongside other people with disabilities at a Goodwill Industries store in Tulsa, Okla.

"Some of them were working for less than four dollars an hour, others for less than three," Silkey Jr. said.

Goodwill Industries was the target of the National Federation of the Blind's nationwide protest Saturday. Local groups protested in front of the Goodwill Industries Kansas store on West Central Avenue in Wichita. They say Goodwill Industries of Kansas is one of 64 entities out of 165 nationwide (roughly 39 percent) that do not guarantee minimum wage for workers with disabilities.

National Federation of the Blind leaders say Freedom of Information Requests filed by the organization show Goodwill Industries employees with disabilities at some of those 64 entities in the United States have been paid as low as 22 cents an hour. Local leaders have just filed four Freedom of Information requests to learn more about local practices.

At the center of their frustration Goodwill's use of the Special Minimum Wage Certificate under Section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"We believe this is an unfair discriminatory and immoral provision in the Fair Labor Standards Act. We want it removed," said Tom Page, 1st Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind Kansas South Central Kansas chapter. "It's been around for a long time and we feel now is the time to bring it to an end."

Section 14c allows employers to pay a piece rate. That means the worker gets paid based on their production level. The piece rate wage structure is based on market studies of the prevailing wages for given services.

It's legal and it's a provision Goodwill leaders say allows them to keep their commitment to giving work opportunities to those with severe disabilities.

"Goodwill is only one of many, many organizations that hire people with disabilities that use that 14c so that we can hire people with disabilities and give them the opportunity to earn a wage," said Gayle Goetz, Vice President of Career Services for Goodwill Industries of Kansas.

Goetz says this payment structure is only used with a small number of Goodwill Industries Kansas' contracts with local businesses. She says the 12 percent of Goodwill Industries of Kansas employees with severe disabilities may be paid that rate for those certain jobs.

"That enables a severely disabled person who can do very little to make some money. Otherwise they would have no job at all," Goetz said.

She says those with severe disabilities also receive family support, life skills training, and education. Goetz says all of this is in addition to whatever disability payments that may be receiving from the federal government.

But even so, Silkey Jr. says that doesn't make the Section 14c provision right.

"It's not a good idea now," Silkey Jr. said. "We live in an enlightened world and it's time we prove it."