

**Statement of Congressman Raúl Grijalva
Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on the Bush Administration's
Proposed Changes to Overtime Rules**

December 11, 2003

First of all, I would like to thank the Chairman, Senator Dorgan and Senator Kennedy, and the staff of the Democratic Policy Committee for organizing this event today. I also thank the panel of working men and women who are going to educate us today about what the Bush administration's proposal to take away overtime pay for millions of workers would mean in their lives, for their pocketbooks, and for their families.

The Bush administration's proposal to take away the hard-earned right to overtime pay is a direct assault on the rights of American workers.

As important and unprecedented as the assault on overtime is, it is one part, a big part, of an overall policy agenda of undermining the rights and living standards of American workers, an agenda that has been pursued across the board from the first day of the Bush Administration.

Yesterday, December 10, was International Human Rights Day, commemorating the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I think that date and that document are of special importance today.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically enumerates the rights of workers, rights that are commonly denied to American workers, and that many workers do not even know they have, 55 years after they were declared.

The Universal Declaration states that among other rights, "everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for herself and her family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection." The Universal Declaration goes on to declare that "everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay."

The right to overtime pay is a hard-earned fundamental right for American workers, and it is a critical human rights issue. Worker rights are human rights, and they have been won with struggle. We must work to attain the ones that have not yet been fully realized, and work to defend the ones that we have secured when they are under assault, as they are so clearly in this circumstance, and in other critical areas.

So again, I thank the Democratic Policy Committee for organizing this important forum on this critical pocketbook issue for millions of working people. I commend and thank the panel of witnesses, working men and women from a range of professions that the Committee has assembled here today. I look forward to hearing their testimony, their expert testimony on the importance of overtime pay, and what the Bush policy would do to their incomes, their

working conditions, and the quality of life for them and for their families. Thank you for speaking out, for standing up for your rights and the rights of all working people. In times like this, what you are doing is absolutely essential, so that the American people can understand what is at stake in this issue for everyone who works for a living.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.