

**Newton (IA) Daily News (The)**

**11/07/2016**

***"Why I pay fair pay today and every day"***

**Audience: 3,761**

**Source Website: [www.newtondailynews.com](http://www.newtondailynews.com)**

Why I pay fair pay today and every day

At Earth Friendly Products, our passion is making cleaning products that are environmentally friendly, safer for people and pets, and affordable for everyone. We make our plant-powered cleaners at sustainable facilities in California, Illinois, New Jersey and Washington using 100 percent renewable energy while creating green jobs and paying our employees a living wage.

For nearly 50 years, our family-owned business has invested in American workers, not just because it supports families and local economies but because it's helped our business grow. We support raising the minimum wage in the states and nationally as a vital investment in our economy.

Opponents of raising the minimum wage claim that increases will hurt business "whether it's the \$12 by 2020 rate that's now on the ballots in Colorado, Maine and Arizona, or the \$13.50 ballot initiative in Washington State, or the gradual increase to \$15 an hour passed in New Jersey but vetoed by the governor. They've used the same claim to oppose any increase in the federal minimum wage above \$7.25, where it's been stuck since 2009.

It's time to retire that old, short-sighted argument. Our experience over the years shows that raising the minimum wage makes good sense for business and good sense for our economy.

Our products are made in the U.S. using globally sourced ingredients and sold in more than 60 countries. We've paid a living wage significantly above state and national levels for many years, including raising our starting wage to \$17 an hour in 2014, and we provide excellent employee benefits as well. Our investment in employees shows in our bottom line. Our voluntary turnover rate is nearly zero, our productivity continues to increase, and our profits continue to climb.

Our employees are our greatest brand ambassadors.

Our industry "the natural products industry" is now one of America's fastest growing industries. We're making products that customers want while creating quality jobs and investing in our nation's environmental and economic future.

Raising the minimum wage is also an investment in our nation's future.

That's why we've joined with Business for a Fair Minimum Wage and more than 100 other natural product companies and retail stores in the Fair Pay Today campaign. Businesses participating in Fair Pay Today are taking the case for raising the minimum wage directly to customers across the country in various ways, including events and social media, showing support for fair pay on product labels, supporting minimum wage state ballot initiatives, and advocating an increased federal minimum wage.

Workers can't make ends meet when the minimum wage is too low. When employees are continually stressed about how to make rent or exhausted from working a second job, it impacts their morale and productivity. When you compensate employees fairly, they are more productive, and they and their families are healthier and happier.

When the minimum wage is low, employee turnover is high. There are significant costs associated with turnover, from hiring and training costs, to mistakes from inexperience, to management time

spent continually replacing employees rather than improving the business. Our employees stay with us, and that nets us something even more valuable: longtime employees with considerable institutional knowledge who keep our business running efficiently and are more responsive to customer needs.

What's more, workers are customers too. When workers have increased buying power, businesses sell more. When the minimum wage goes up, the additional paycheck dollars go right back into the economy.A

Businesses will have time to plan and adjust to new minimum wage rates as they are phased in gradually. Lower-wage businesses will see the upside of a higher pay floor, such as reduced employee turnover costs and increased productivity, while benefiting from increased consumer spending rippling through their business and the economy.

The Fair Pay Today slogan is "Good for Business, Good for Us All!" and we've found that to be true over years of experience. A fair minimum wage is essential to creating a truly sustainable economy that helps all businesses and all Americans thrive.

**Kelly Vlahakis-Hanks** is President and CEO of Earth Friendly Products, maker of ECOS brand green cleaning products.

Copyright A(c) 2016 Newton Daily News. All rights reserved.

Audience provided by Nielsen/NetRatings

***Highlights: At Earth Friendly Products, our passion ..., Kelly Vlahakis-Hanks***