

Opinion: One way to make living easier in Virginia – letter to the Washington Post

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Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) told reporters he is “concerned about the cost of living in Virginia and we’re continuing to evaluate how best to address that,” as reported in the Nov. 26 Metro article “[Budget battle looms in Virginia](#).” Facing a tighter fiscal environment and Democratic control of the legislature, Mr. Youngkin and fellow Republicans could help working families without denting the budget by making an expected Democratic push for a higher minimum wage a bipartisan affair.

The GOP has been trying to attract more minority and [working-class voters](#). However, party leaders have stopped short of addressing core economic issues, such as supporting higher wages and better benefits, and mainly stress cultural issues.

Working with Democrats to improve wages entails political risk. But so does vetoing bills to raise Virginia’s \$12 minimum wage more rapidly than under [current law](#). Republican involvement in the process could help address employer concerns, including [possible job loss in rural areas](#), where wages and the cost of living are lower than in metropolitan areas. It could also reap political rewards by expanding the party’s base.

Republicans also could negotiate with Democrats to provide all workers with [paid sick days](#), which are taken for granted by higher-paid workers but not available to a large percentage of low-wage workers. In 2021, during the covid pandemic, the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill to provide paid sick days to 30,000 [home health-care workers](#). Efforts to extend the legislation to others have stalled.

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