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## **Rising Inequality Lifting Some Virginians, Sinking Others**

RICHMOND, VA – Looking at trends in the median wage over the past 30 years makes Virginia look like a great place to make a living. But a scan of the entire wage landscape shows big wage gains for top earners, and big losses for workers on the bottom.

“Disparate growth in wages has been trending for decades in Virginia, with the top earners getting farther ahead and lower earners falling behind,” says Michael Cassidy, President and CEO of the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, an independent fiscal and economic policy organization in Richmond.

In new analysis released today, co-authors Cassidy and Institute Policy Director Sara Okos show that while the top 10 percent of earners (making at least \$47.97 per hour) have seen their wages grow over 8 percent since the start of the recession, the wages of the bottom 10 percent of earners (making \$8.19 or less per hour) are now over 7 percent below their pre-recession levels.

Taking an even longer view, over the past 30 years wages for the top 10 percent of earners grew 19 times as fast as those at the bottom.

“As a result of these trends, Virginia faces record levels of inequality that threaten the state’s economic stability and long-term prosperity because the middle class and low-income households that make up most of the population aren’t earning enough to buy the goods and services the economy is capable of producing,” says Cassidy.

Other key findings of the report include:

- Over the last 30 years, median wages in Virginia have grown 24 percent, taking account of inflation.
- Since 2007, only workers earning the median or higher have seen their wages grow in Virginia.
- In 2012, the top 10 percent earned 2.7 times as much as the median worker. Only California had a larger disparity.
- After a slight narrowing of the gap between male and female median wages during the recession, that progress started to unravel in 2012, setting back gains for women to pre-recession level.

The full report, *Caught in the Wake*, is available at [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org)

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**About The Commonwealth Institute**

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org) for more information.