



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 14, 2021

Jayapal Staffers: Progressive Rep Mistreats Staffers, Who Earn Less Than \$15 Per Hour. Some Seek Therapy

U.S. Representative Pramilla Jayapal (Wash.) is a leftist Democrat who wants a \$15 per hour minimum wage. She ceaselessly harps on “workers’ rights.” Yet the “progressive” leader is also reportedly a whip-cracking tyrant whose congressional office is a white-collar sweatshop.

Staffers for the Indian immigrant work so many hours their pay is as little as that of a Walmart employee, [Buzzfeed reported](#) in a brutal exposé. Such are Jayapal’s demands that staffers seek therapy. One broke down in a crying jag.



Rep. Pramilla Jayapal (AP Images)

One wonders whether Jayapal serves a crust of moldy chapati for lunch.

Long Hours

Though “Jayapal is one of the highest-profile progressives in D.C. and the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, 14 former staffers from throughout her nearly five years in Congress describe a dysfunctional and volatile workplace,” the website reported. “There is, they said, a serious disconnect between how she talks about workers’ rights and how she treats her own staff.”

The grim working conditions, staffers say, are intolerable:

They described Jayapal as a boss who berated staff in front of others, demanded grueling hours, and maintained an office culture marked by constantly changing expectations and little tolerance for error, to the extent that some staffers sought therapy and questioned their careers in public service. Since taking office, Jayapal has had one of the highest staff turnover rates in the House, due in large part, former employees said, to the unrealistic standards she sets. “It’s not sustainable to be able to stay for too long,” one said....

“I’ve worked in bad environments before, and I have worked in some awful environments before for some awful people. I’ve been colleagues with some awful people,” one former Jayapal staffer said. “I have never worked in a place that has made me so miserable and so not excited for public service as Pramila Jayapal’s office.”

Such are the working conditions that Jayapal has one of the highest turnover rates for Capitol Hill staffers. She ranks 33 of 539 congressmen from 2017 through 2020. One staffer accepted a pay cut to get away from her, while another, after a year of fighting for a raise, finally gave up and quit. It was an ordeal “emotionally, physically, and mentally.”

“Jayapal has also been known allegedly to berate staffers, at times publicly,” [Buzzfeed reported](#):



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In one early 2019 instance, she yelled at a staffer in the anteroom of a House Budget Committee hearing over how an interaction with a witness had gone, according to sources who learned about it immediately or shortly after it happened. Despite the encounter taking place in a back room, there were several witnesses, including employees from other offices. The witnesses said the employee, who was then new to staffing Jayapal at hearings, was in tears after it happened. The staffer who was yelled at declined to provide comment for this story; Jayapal's office confirmed the incident and said she apologized afterward.

When Jayapal put on a few pounds because her tight schedule conflicted with her time at the gym, she blamed a staff member.

At least six staff members have sought a check up from the neck up. Jayapal's answer for that? "It is horrible to imply that accessing mental health services is a bad thing," her spokesman said. "The Congresswoman has worked to destigmatize mental health care and pushes hard to ensure every person has the full range of care they need."

One reason they staffers needed a shrink is that Jayapal drives them day and night:

Not only was it common for [staffers] them to be online and working at odd hours, but they said taking time off on weekends and holidays was often out of the question.

Several former Jayapal employees said they frequently worked more than 12 hours a day, sometimes from 8 a.m. to past midnight without meaningful breaks. While this is common across Capitol Hill, especially when the legislative calendar or a particular national crisis calls for it, it is striking in the context of a lawmaker with a reputation as a labor champion.

Low Hourly Wage

The labor champion [brags about](#) breaking immigration law to bring [wage-busting](#) illegal aliens into the country.

But the mind-numbing hours raise questions about Jayapal's commitment to the \$15 per hour minimum wage, one of the progressive movement's sacred cows. Jayapal's own assistant earns \$42,500 annually, a piddling sum for the Washington, D.C., area. That's about \$20 for a standard 40-hour week or 2,080-hour year. But again, Jayapal's staffers don't work 2,080 hours a year.

"If you were to divide [salaries] into an hourly wage, it would probably be like \$12 to \$15 an hour" considering all those hours, a staff member said of the Dickensian pay scale. "Which is not ideal when considering, like, we are advocating for a \$15 minimum wage."

"Ultimately, despite believing in Jayapal's cause and having a certain image of her," [Buzzfeed observed](#), "former staffers were largely disappointed by the reality of working for her."



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