

# FRANCES PERKINS CENTER

We feel Frances Perkins is the ideal candidate given her service to the United States as Secretary of Labor throughout Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. As architect of the New Deal she drafted and saw enacted Social Security, unemployment insurance, the minimum wage, labor safety, and the forty hour work week—policies which ultimately created the modern middle class.

Frances Perkins dedicated her life to bettering America's working families, yet she is in many respects lost to history. It is part of our mission to bring to light her significant contributions to the nation's great democratic legacy and ensure that she is recognized, at last, for all that she did for all of us.

**How fitting and powerful to have her likeness grace the nation's currency.**

# FRANCES PERKINS CENTER

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December 9, 2014

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew  
Secretary of the Treasury  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Lew:

On behalf of the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, Maine, I wish to propose that the portrait of Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945, and the first woman cabinet member, appear on a future issue of United States currency. Recognized as the woman behind the New Deal, Perkins has influenced for good the lives of countless millions of Americans.

During an appearance in Kansas City, Missouri on July 30, 2014, President Obama said, "Last week, a young girl wrote to me to ask me why aren't there any women on our currency, and then she gave me a long list of possible women to put on our dollar bills and quarters and stuff—which I thought was a pretty good idea."

The next night, Lawrence O'Donnell of MSNBC's "The Last Word," responded to the President's comments by recounting the accomplishments of Frances Perkins. As Labor Secretary throughout FDR's presidency, she advocated successfully for Social Security, unemployment insurance, the minimum wage, labor safety, and the forty-hour work week. She was not successful in advocating for national health insurance, but when Congress finally established Medicare, it appeared as an amendment to the Social Security Act. Although Franklin Roosevelt thanked her for her many contributions to American society, the country has never done so. O'Donnell concluded his remarks by suggesting that currency depicting Frances Perkins would be a way to do that.

Adam Cohen, who teaches at Yale Law School, has said, "If American history textbooks accurately reflected the past, Frances Perkins would be recognized as one of the nation's greatest heroes—as iconic as Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Paine." We feel strongly that Americans need to know about Frances Perkins and how her efforts continue to make a better life for each new American generation. Featuring her on the nation's currency would be a big step in this direction.

Our center is a non-profit educational organization devoted to furthering the Perkins legacy. The Frances Perkins family homestead here in Newcastle, Maine was recently designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark. The staff of Maine's congressional delegation urged us to contact you to initiate consideration of this proposal. We would welcome the opportunity to assist the Department of the Treasury in the process leading to the appearance of Frances Perkins on United States currency.

Sincerely,

Michael Chaney  
Executive Director

## FRANCES PERKINS

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