

California's working poor grow poorer

By Pauline Bartolone, CalMatters

After a day of picking grapes for \$9.25 an hour, Eva Montes waits in line for food aid in the parking lot of the Veterans Memorial building in Earlimart, a community of 8,537 people.

"You can't make enough money for what you spend," Montes says in Spanish while waiting with other farmworkers for her number to be called. Today she'll take home a box of bagged greens and other produce distributed by a local non-profit.

"Sometimes, you don't earn enough to buy things for what the children need for school, or food for the house, or personal expenses ... like house payments or bills."

Montes is part of a growing economic problem in California: low wage workers are getting poorer, and there are more of them.

There were about 354,800 Californians working full-time and year-round in 2013 living under the federal poverty limit, according to the nonprofit California Budget and Policy Center. That's 3.1 percent of California's full-time workforce, double the rate it was 35 years ago.

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