



The Vermonter Candy
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Sept. 30, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Let me tell you about our family business, which began in 1950, making peanut brittle and walnut crunch candy, using Vermont maple syrup. In 1952, I moved with my parents from Dorset to Putney, Vermont, and the candy-making business came with us to a home that included room for a small factory. It supported the four of us, including my brother who was born in 1954, through our high school years.

After my brother and I left home, our father (now divorced) continued the manufacturing business, delivering it to stores all over Vermont and a few other parts of New England. He remarried in the late 70s, and the couple continued the business. When Herb "Stick" Handy died in 1996, his widow ran the company for eight more years.

In 2004, I took over The Vermonter Candy and added modern upgrades like UPC codes and Nutrition Facts to the packaging. We joined the Vermont Specialty Food Association so I would be informed of changes in state and federal legislation, like GMO labeling, for example, and new record-keeping laws.

Our candy-making process is labor intensive. Each time the minimum wage increases, the cost of each box of candy goes up.

In 2004, the year I took over, the minimum wage was \$6.75/hour and the cost of a box of our peanut brittle was \$3.40.

In 2009, the factory operated 29 days throughout the year.

In 2014, the minimum wage was \$8.73/hour and the cost of a box of our peanut brittle was \$6.50. The factory operated 19 days in 2014.

In 2017, the minimum wage is \$10.00/hour and the cost of a box of our peanut brittle is \$9.50. With only three months left, we have worked seven days this calendar year.

Do you see where this is going? For the first time, I've started talking about the possibility of closing down the business since it's no longer profitable. This business used to support a family of four. One less "made in Vermont" product in the stores, and five part-time employees without that paycheck that used to be twice a month or more. A small income, it makes a difference in the lives of these families.

Although there are other factors that contribute to rising costs of making a box of candy, the minimum wage is a big one. I urge you to raise it only as the Cost of Living (COLA) increases.

Yours truly,

Carolyn Handy, owner