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We need a nuanced solution from Salem

Portland and rural Oregon are touched differently by big minimum wage hike

When the Oregon Legislature convenes a 2016 short session, lawmakers will confront various proposals to raise the minimum wage. And voters next November could confront multiple minimum wage increase ballot measures.

The reality of the Legislature's coming minimum wage discussion carries at least two elements. Thanks to a 2002 ballot initiative, Oregon has a minimum wage that is the second highest in the nation. It is indexed to rise with inflation. Secondly, any discussion of abruptly hiking the minimum wage to \$13.50 or \$15 must reckon with Oregon's two economies: that in Portland and that in the rest of the state.

Last week's issue of *Willamette Week* reported that Senate President Peter Courtney is leery of a one-size-fits-all approach to a major minimum wage hike. Courtney recognizes there is a gulf between Portland's economy, which is one of the hottest in the nation, and the rest of Oregon, much of which has not recovered from the Great Recession. "If we increase the wage, I want to see a minimum wage that has a floor—less than \$13.50," said Courtney. "Portland should be allowed to go big time, but I can't have a very big minimum across the state. It'll just crush smaller communities."

Sen. Courtney's skepticism is well founded. While many Portland employers would have little or no difficulty handling a large wage hike, such a boost would push many small and mid-sized businesses in smaller economies to the margin of survival and perhaps failure.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson recently led legislators on a trip around Oregon. She says: "From Ontario to Roseburg to Astoria, I've talked to people who say \$15 is crippling. I don't think we have anticipated all of the unforeseen consequences. I am still absorbing information."

Gov. Kate Brown's press aide Kristen Grainger says: "The main point she's trying to make is she wants to make sure that it meets the needs of rural Oregon and small businesses and in Portland. She has been careful to stay away from a dollar amount."

A nuanced solution from the Legislature would be a good thing. That would give Oregonians a landmark in the ballot initiative campaigns we expect.

Tribes eye escape from high waters

Between a long-threatened tsunami and gradual sea-level rise, Washington state coastal tribes are feeling antsy.

In 2012, Congress voted to provide high land so the Quileute Tribe on the Olympic Peninsula could relocate its town of La Push away from the Pacific Ocean shoreline. The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe in Pacific County still has housing and other infrastructure near sea level in Tokeland, but has constructed a major evacuation center on a nearby hill.

Recently, the Quinault Indian Nation in Grays Harbor County is considering abandoning its historical village of Taholah due to ongoing problems with ocean encroachment. Located at the mouth of the Quinault River, the town depends on a 2,000-foot-long sea wall to shield it from damaging surf. But the tribal government led by tribal council President Fawn Sharp had to declare a state of emergency after storm-driven waves flooded part of Taholah in March 2014.

Now, National Public Radio's KUOW reports, "The Quinault tribe has developed a \$60 million plan to move the entire village of Taholah uphill and out of harm's way. That will mean moving the school, the courthouse, the police station and the homes of 700 tribal members a safer distance from the encroaching Pacific." U.S. taxpayers will be asked to foot part of the bill.

This has spurred Sharp to actively participate in international

climate talks. Sharp told KUOW she's "heartened by the increasing presence of representatives from island nations and other developing countries at the international climate gatherings in recent years. Indigenous peoples around the world are often on the front lines of climate change, despite the fact that they contribute the smallest amount of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere."

It is generally true that the world's poorest people will be among those who suffer the most from sea-level rise, droughts, cyclones and other symptoms of a world climate expected to become more erratic.

Although non-native residents of the Pacific Northwest coast mostly do not live with the same financial handicaps as tribal members do, our communities often do contain economically disadvantaged people. And all of us struggle to gain much attention from distant policymakers in state capitals and Washington, D.C.

The moves — both literal and political — by coastal tribes should help open the eyes of the dwindling number of steadfast climate-change deniers in our midst. Quinaults and other tribes have lived here long enough to know change when they see it, and they would not be walking away from hereditary villages in the absence of highly compelling reasons.

All coastal residents should band together to advocate for attention and action in this era of need.

GUEST COLUMN

Early childhood development is a great and smart investment

By DAN GAFFNEY
 For The Daily Astorian

Children who receive quality early childhood development have much better education, employment, social and health outcomes as adults.

The vast majority of research shows this to be especially true for disadvantaged children.

Unfortunately, some of this good news has been questioned with the recent coverage of a study done at Vanderbilt University on Tennessee's Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program. It is disappointing that one of our local television stations failed to look very deeply into the story and made the Vanderbilt study the focus of their news coverage a couple of weeks ago.

The Vanderbilt study points out that children who attend preschool were much better off when entering kindergarten. Yet there was a decline in achievement when children were in first and second grades.

What the study failed to point out was that there are no standards for Tennessee's Prekindergarten Program and therefore no alignment with the standards found in K-12 schools. So even though Tennessee has good intentions, they have not gone far enough yet in providing consistently high-quality prekindergarten experiences and aligning them with their K-12 programs.

What has happened is that their primary grade (K-3) teachers face a growing challenge with classrooms filled with children who have a wide range of social, behavioral and academic skills.

It is reassuring to know that Oregon has adopted good prekindergarten standards, Head Start Early Learning Outcomes. Oregon leaders are expecting to release a document that aligns these standards to Oregon's K-12 standards, the Common



Dan Gaffney



Daily Astorian/File Photo

Jacyie Browning turns her tassel during the graduating ceremony for the Lil' Sprouts prekindergarten class, a city of Astoria program at the Robert Gray School in 2014.

Core State Standards, in the spring.

In Clatsop County, we find all five school districts working with child care and preschool providers to align strategies and curricula so we don't have the situation that occurred in Tennessee. Oregon has noted positive effects in states like North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Oregon is implementing a system to help preschools and parents know how preschools are doing on meeting the preschool standards. The Quality Rating and Improvement System is being introduced throughout Oregon so we can determine how well individual preschools are doing.

It is expected that by providing high-quality early childhood experiences and aligning them with K-12 expectations that Oregon can have long-lasting positive results. The states that have aligned systems have seen persistent educational gains, better retention rates, better

The positive gains are evident in cognitive abilities, executive function and social skills.

attitudes about school and less absenteeism into the eighth grade. The positive gains are evident in cognitive abilities, executive function and social skills.

Furthermore Professor James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning economist, has over 35 years of data that indicates that people who attended a high-quality preschool have 25 percent greater earnings, significantly fewer criminal justice issues and better physical health as adults. He stated there is actually a 7 to 10 percent per year return on investments.

That seems like a pretty smart investment for a community to make. Who in Clatsop County is interested?

Dan Gaffney is a retired Clatsop county school administrator who coordinates Clatsop Kinder Ready, the county prekindergarten through Grade 3 consortium. For more information consult its website at www.ClatsopKR.com.

Mizzou, Yale and free speech

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF
 New York Times News Service

On university campuses across the country, from Mizzou to Yale, we have two noble forces colliding with explosive force.

One is a concern for minority or marginalized students and faculty members, who are often left feeling as outsiders in ways that damage everyone's education.

At the University of Missouri, a black professor, Cynthia Frisby, wrote, "I have been called the N-word too many times to count."

The problem is not just racists who use epithets but also administrators who seem to acquiesce. That's why Mizzou students — especially football players — used their clout to oust the university system's president. They showed leadership in trying to rectify a failure of leadership.

But moral voices can also become sanctimonious bullies.

"Go, go, go," some Mizzou protesters yelled as they jostled a student photographer, Tim Tai, who was trying to document the protests unfolding in a public space. And Melissa Click, an assistant professor who joined the protests, is heard on a video calling for "muscle" to oust another student journalist (she later apologized).

Tai represented the other noble force in these upheavals — free expression. He tried to make the point, telling the crowd: "The First Amendment protects your right to be here — and mine."

We like to caricature great moral debates as right confronting wrong. But often, to some degree, it's right colliding with right.

Yes, universities should work harder to be inclusive. And, yes, campuses must assure free expression, which means protecting dissonant and unwel-

come voices that sometimes leave other people feeling aggrieved or wounded.

On both counts we fall far short.

We've also seen Wesleyan students cut funding for the student newspaper after it ran an op-ed criticizing the Black Lives Matter movement. At Mount Holyoke, students canceled a production of "The Vagina Monologues" because they felt it excluded transgender women. Protests led to the withdrawal of Condoleezza Rice as commencement speaker at Rutgers and Christine Lagarde at Smith.

This is sensitivity but also intolerance, and it is disproportionately an instinct on the left.

Education is about stretching muscles, and that's painful in the gym and in the lecture hall.

I'm a pro-choice liberal who has been invited to infect evangelical Christian universities with progressive thoughts, and to address Catholic universities where I've praised condoms and birth control programs. I'm sure I discomfited many students on these conservative campuses, but it's a tribute to them that they were willing to be challenged. In the same spirit, liberal universities should seek out pro-life social conservatives to speak.

More broadly, academia — especially the social sciences — undermines itself by a tilt to the left. We should cherish all kinds of diversity, including the presence of conservatives to infuriate us liberals and make us uncomfortable. Education is about stretching muscles, and that's painful in the gym and in the lecture hall.

One of the wrenching upheavals lately has unfolded at Yale. Long-time frustrations among minority students boiled over after administrators seemed to them insufficiently concerned about offensive costumes for Halloween. A widely circulated video showed a furious student shouting down one administrator, professor



Nicholas Kristof

Nicholas Christakis. "Be quiet!" she screams at him. "It is not about creating an intellectual space!"

A student wrote an op-ed about "the very real hurt" that minority students feel, adding: "I don't want to debate. I want to talk about my pain." That prompted savage commentary online. "Is Yale letting in 8-year-olds?" one person

asked on Twitter. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page denounced "Yale's Little Robespierres." It followed up Wednesday with another editorial, warning that the PC mindset "threatens to undermine or destroy universities as a place of learning."

I suggest we all take a deep breath. The protesters at Mizzou and Yale and elsewhere make a legitimate point: Universities should work harder to make all students feel they are safe and belong. Members of minorities — whether black or transgender or (on many campuses) evangelical conservatives — should be able to feel a part of campus, not feel mocked in their own community.

The problems at Mizzou were underscored on Tuesday when there were death threats against black students. What's unfolding at universities is not just about free expression but also about a safe and nurturing environment.

Consider an office where bosses shrug as some men hang nude centerfolds and leeringly speculate about the sexual proclivities of female colleagues. Free speech issue? No! That's a hostile work environment. And imagine if you're an 18-year-old for whom this is your 24/7 home — named, say, for a 19th-century pro-slavery white supremacist.

My favorite philosopher, the late Sir Isaiah Berlin, argued that there was a deep human yearning to find the One Great Truth. In fact, he said, that's a dead end: Our fate is to struggle with a "plurality of values," with competing truths, with trying to reconcile what may well be irreconcilable.

That's unsatisfying. It's complicated. It's also life.