

GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE NEWS-REVIEW

School is back in session, pay attention

Aisles at stores have been stocked with back-to-school supplies for the past month. Soon the first day of school pictures will make a return to social media.

There will be lots of smiling faces of children ready to catch up with their friends and teachers about all the adventures they've had this summer.

And then there are the moms — overcome with guilt for sending their little ones off to the war-torn trenches of elementary school and relishing the thought of some extra solitude.

This season of change means it's time for our annual warning to you drivers.

All you drivers need to slow down and not treat traffic lights as optional. The children need us to be our best behind the wheel.

Children will be out at bus stops before and after school, they'll be present in school zones during school hours and after-school activities will send the little ones to a variety of places.

Be ready to step on the brake for a kindergartner who's learning to look both ways.

Be ready to slow down as you follow a school bus on your morning commute.

And please follow the rules of the road.

Stop for school buses as drivers load and unload students. Go the speed limit. Stop at crosswalks.

Keep your eyes on the road.

We advise you to leave home a few minutes early as traffic is about to slow down on your commute to work.

Education can provide students with a great future and help them get ready for the challenges of adulthood.

If you're in a position to get involved at a school, most — if not all — welcome the help.

If you have an extra box of snacks or juice boxes ask a teacher if they need these items.

Local businesses have donated school supplies to students who couldn't afford them. And we're sure there are many teachers who stuffed their own cabinets with extra supplies just in case.

Teachers are the foundation of education, so if you have a child or grandchild enrolled in school, try to meet the people who spend 30 hours a week with them.

Go to concerts, performances, sporting events, field trips and any other events hosted by the local schools — it's a great way to meet teachers in a less formal setting.

And to the teachers: Thank you and good luck this school year.



Minimum wage should be a living wage

I'm an employer who pays my workers a living wage. No one in my plant makes less than \$15 per hour. Normally in our capitalist system, paying higher wages would make my business less competitive simply because a higher median wage costs more. But one thing that has been lost in this whole minimum wage debate is the value that raising incomes for the working classes brings to our federal, state and local governments.

For example, my workers pay more in taxes than those earning the federal minimum wage, and they also rely on government assistance less than their minimum wage counterparts. The federal government, and other taxpayers, benefit from this.

But you know who's getting the biggest piece of the pie? My competition. By not paying a fair wage, my competition is able to undercut my prices, and at the expense of taxpayers. This is not only unfair to me as their competitor, but it's unfair to all of us who pay taxes.

In 2012, 6.7 percent of full-time workers received food stamps, public housing assistance or Medicaid. While that might not sound like a lot, that's almost 8.5 million Americans. In a country as rich as ours, we should not have millions of full-time workers leaning on government assistance.

Opponents of a \$15/hr minimum wage point to the fact that only 2.7 percent of our workforce earns the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hr, supposedly making a wage hike inconsequential.

However, 41 million workers earn less than \$15/hr, which many researchers have found to be a living wage in the majority of the country. Until something changes, 41 million Americans will continue to struggle to make ends meet, all while those at the

top become richer and richer.

A great example of this is Amazon, where 10 percent of employees receive food stamps. Jeff Bezos, their CEO, recently became the richest person in modern history with a net worth of more than \$150 billion.

Despite a growing economy and booming corporate profits, American wages haven't gone up in recent years. The free market simply isn't working here. This is where the federal and state governments should step in. The federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hr has lost 9.6 percent of its purchasing power to inflation since it was instituted in 2009. It is up to politicians to require employers to pay their workers enough where they don't need government aid. Otherwise, employers who do the right thing regardless of legislation will be put out of business by those who undercut them with wages that have not kept up with inflation or the cost of living.

I'd rather run a company where my employees don't have to worry about how they're going to survive another month. All I have to ask when debating this point to other business owners is this: "Can you tell me if it is possible to raise a child, pay for housing, buy groceries on \$7.25 an hour?" The answer is always "No." They know the truth, and so do their workers. So why do we let them get away with it?

We need to hold the Jeff Bezos' of the world accountable for the substantial number of working poor in our country that their business practices are creating. Any business that can't afford to pay a living wage should cease to exist.

We should no longer allow extremely profitable companies whose owners have multiple luxury cars and take several exotic vacations per year to ask our government to subsidize their

My Voice ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Prince is founder and president of Card Marketing Services Inc. and vice chair of the Patriotic Millionaires. Members of the Patriotic Millionaires are high-net worth Americans, business leaders and investors united in their concern about the destabilizing concentration of wealth and power in America.

The organization's mission is to build a more stable, prosperous and inclusive nation by promoting public policies based on equal political representation, a guaranteed living wage for all working citizens and a fair tax system.

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employees' unlivable wages. It is this inequality and greed, and not simply laziness or ineptitude on the part of workers, that is the source of growing class warfare. We need to put a stop to it, and that starts by voting this November.

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Phone: **541-963-3161**

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-422-3110

Fax: 541-963-7804

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com

Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER

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