

# Should the minimum wage be raised?

PRO

Frank Jordan

Copy Editor

Registered voters in Oregon are about to tackle the minimum wage issue again on Nov 5, just as they did in 1996. The voters will be asked to approve Ballot Measure 25, which will increase the minimum wage to \$6.90 per hour, with increases every year tied to increases in the cost-of-living.

As a single man who has worked in the retail/restaurant industry most of his adult life, I know personally what kind of struggles most people have with trying to make a living and take care of a family on \$6.50 per hour. We living in Oregon are actually fairly lucky to be living here, as our minimum wage is higher than most states in the union. But is that wage high enough to support the basic necessities of life. Hardly.

A person who works 40 hours a week making the minimum makes approximately \$13,000 a year, before taxes. After taking out the nine percent for Oregon taxes, the ten percent for federal taxes and the 7.75 percent for Social Security, Medicare and Worker's Compensation taxes, a person is left with about \$8,800 per year. Think real hard about trying to pay rent, buy food, maintain a car, pay utilities and have enough to live on, not just exist. It is hard. Real hard. A forty-cent increase in the minimum wage would help.

Granted, it would not help much, but every little bit does help. That extra forty cents translates to about \$800 a year. That money more than likely goes right back into the economy, buying groceries, buying gas, paying for child care, helping an individual trying to work and go to school to make a better life for oneself. Trying to get away from the minimum wage life.

The service industry is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy. Those making the minimum or slightly more than the minimum wage hold many of these unskilled positions. Employers have a hard time holding on to people who make the minimum wage, but if an increase would help employers hold on to people that they have trained to do a job, that increase in labor cost should be offset by the fact that employers don't have to spend more to train new people.

As a common working man, I would urge people to vote for Measure 25, which would raise the minimum wage to \$6.90 per hour, with subsequent raises every year tied to the rise in the cost-of-living. Help those people who pump your gas, serve you your value meal and wash your dirty dishes after eating in a restaurant. They might be able to thank your business in the end by patronizing your establishment with the extra money they will be able to spend. Vote Yes on Measure 25.

CON

Isaiah Creel

Staff Writer

On the surface, an increased minimum wage would be a good thing. No, an increased minimum wage would be a great thing. The problem with Measure 25 is that the minimum wage will not stop increasing.

WOW! Isaiah, you must be stupid not to want more money!

I work in fast food. The increased wages would help me out, not to mention the 20+ people I work with who have no college education or hope for job advancement. They would most likely be excited by the increase in 2004, and for that matter they would come to expect their yearly raise by 2010.

What happens though when years down the road, inflation is so high that the minimum wage is \$20 per hour, and the small business owners can't afford to pay their employees?

At that point, there won't be enough gold in Fort Knox to pay off the big wigs in Washington, let alone Joe Schmo Whopper Flipper.

Oh wait! We could just print off reams and reams of useless dollar bills when the American dollar becomes more worthless than the German Mark, post-World War I.

An increased minimum wage increases the cost of living.

In order to make up for the increased amount of cash flowing through the state, manufacturers will need to charge more in order to keep their profits up. They will also have to decrease the amount of employees they hire...

If the fat cats want to do something for the good of the general populous, they should do something about Oregon's unemployment rate.

We're number 2! We're number 2! (Oregon's unemployment rate is ranked second in the nation!)

Being forced to pay their employees more won't make business owners, managers, or operators able to hire any new employees. This could potentially mean more layoffs and/or pay cuts.

The intention behind the measure is good, but raising the cost of living... oh wait! I mean minimum wage (excuse me) will not help the elderly on fixed income.

Voting yes on Measure 25 will only grease the spiraling slide into the depths of recession. Recession!

What good is money if you don't have a job to make any? What good is a job if the dollar can only be used as kindling?

Vote NO on Measure 25. Or else.

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## Measure 20 addresses both sides of smoking solution



Erinn Lerten  
Opinion Editor

• The effects of Ballot Measure 20 will be felt far and wide when the new cigarette tax goes into effect Nov 1.

Smokers will soon be paying with more than their health for cigarettes. Oregon voters overwhelmingly approved Ballot Measure 20, by a margin of 64-36 percent, which will increase the tax on cigarettes 60 cents per pack, starting Nov. 1.

The new revenue created by the cigarette tax, about \$113.9 million, will help fund the Oregon Health Plan and will restore \$2 million in the 2001-2003 budget for the state's tobacco prevention program, which was cut during this year's legislative special session. By addressing both problems, prevention spending and a cigarette tax increase, Oregon can look forward to reduced smoking

among kids and adults, thus saving lives and saving money on smoking-related health care.

Higher cigarette taxes have been proven to reduce smoking, particularly among teens. For every ten percent increase in price, one percent of smokers will quit. Each time the cigarette tax has been increased, tobacco use has fallen more than the projections. In 1996, after raising the cigarette tax 29 cents, smoking went down

9 percent, double the 4.5 percent predicted.

With 20 percent of Oregonians smoking, it is projected that the new tax will help 45,000 to 55,000 Oregonians quit smoking. Tobacco's toll on teens is particularly devastating. Twenty percent of 11th graders currently smoke, and 8,900 kids will become regular smokers every year, one-third of

whom will die prematurely. However, youth smokers are particularly sensitive to price increases and as a result this group of smokers may decline at a faster rate than adult smokers. Smoking-related health care costs Oregon and its taxpayers \$871 million a year.

The opposition of Measure 20 argues that the tax unfairly targets certain individuals. However, this is a voluntary tax. No one has to pay this tax.

The truth of the matter is, if somehow smoking were totally eliminated and the tax disappeared, society would save more in medical expenses from preventing smoking-related illnesses.



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