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# Minimum wage bill misses our diversity

## Speaker Kotek’s last-minute bill is too much, too late

After an initial derailment, a proposal to raise Oregon’s minimum wage is back on track in the waning days of the state Legislature. That’s an unfortunate development for businesses outside the Portland metropolitan area. We previously editorialized against such legislation. Our opinion has not been changed by arguments recently offered by Portland politicians and their supporters. Their pitch ignores our state’s economic diversity and relies on benevolent assumptions not supported by science. House Speaker Tina Kotek proposes to raise the minimum hourly rate to \$13 by 2018. It would be pegged at \$11 in 2016 and \$12 in 2017. It does not matter to Rep. Kotek that Oregon’s current rate of \$9.25 per hour already is the second-highest in the nation. And she conveniently sidesteps questions about the potential impact of such increases beyond her affluent Portland district. Large Portland-area employers like Nike and Intel can easily absorb such payroll increases. But most private-sector jobs in Clatsop County and elsewhere in rural Oregon are found in small business — many of them family-owned and run on a shoestring. Such large increases will require them to cut hours, reduce staff size or pass on to customers those additional costs. Such outcomes would hurt the very people the minimum wage hike is designed to help. A typical response to those likely scenarios is an activist rant: “The CEOs should take a pay cut!” Tell that to mom-and-pop business owners, who at

times forgo their own paycheck in order to make payroll for their employees. Oregon’s economy is still recovering from the brutal recession. In May, the number of jobs in the state declined for the first time in three years. And while the Portland area is humming, the rest of the state still is hampered by high unemployment and a lack of skilled workers. Raising the minimum wage by 37 percent over the next few years will exacerbate the challenges facing small businesses. Rep. Kotek’s proposal would rescind current law to allow for some cities to approve larger increases in the minimum wage. That plays to the good citizens of Portland and Eugene, but does nothing for those in the small communities of Clatsop County. Oregon’s minimum wage is half the median hourly wage for all Oregon hourly workers. That is a reasonable level for a wage meant for entry-level workers when compared with those with years of experience or specialized skills. If there is good news for workers in Oregon, it is this: “Real wages are growing ... Average hourly earnings increased 2.2 percent over the year for Oregon’s private-sector payroll employees. These wage gains were above the rate of consumer price inflation.” That recent report from state government shows that employers are responding to economic conditions without interference from Rep. Kotek and her Portland colleagues.

# Time for USA team to step up

## Women’s World Cup sparkles, but soccer scandals remain

All eyes in the American soccer world will be on Ottawa Friday at 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time. The Canadian capital will be the venue for the U.S. Women’s National Team’s loser-out quarterfinal against China. And, judging by its four erratic performances in the opening rounds, the U.S. players will have to step up their consistency to advance to the semifinals. Ever since the first Women’s World Cup tournament in 1991, interest has been building, in part because of the number of American girls playing the sport — including here on the North Coast through the Lower Columbia Youth Soccer Association and for Astoria and Seaside high school teams. The U.S. traveled to that first tournament in China accompanied by a lone American journalist to report on the “novelty” of the female game. He came home with a notable scoop: the inspirational Michelle Akers’ two goals in the final against rivals Norway secured the trophy for the USA and set the bar for women’s soccer in the intervening years, winning four out of five Olympic gold medals. Fast-forward 20-plus years and media coverage has ballooned. Every game is televised in the U.S.; fans have packed Canadian stadiums. And parity in international women’s soccer has arrived. When the U.S. hosted the 1999 tourney, and won that memorable penalty shootout final in the Rose Bowl,

there were four or five teams playing at their skill level. By the time our women lost the semifinal at Portland’s PGE Park in 2003, winners Germany and Brazil had improved, too, and were mirroring their men’s teams, the most successful in soccer history. Although there were a couple of 10-0 blowouts, this year’s opening pool-play rounds were generally competitive and any team in the quarterfinals is good enough to lift the trophy. England, France and Australia are among nations that have invested in women’s programs; some of their stars play in the United States, and benefit from our fitness, tactical and technical training. Thanks, in part, to the University of Portland, Canada has developed world-class players, too. All this is a far cry from the other recent headlines world soccer has been making. The FBI has unveiled a long overdue investigation into corruption among international administrators, with obscene amounts of cash secretly changing hands for the rights to host lucrative tournaments. Court revelations, plea deals and confessions will further tarnish the image of FIFA, the body which runs world soccer. Meanwhile, the 2015 Women’s World Cup rolls on toward the July 5 championship game in Vancouver, British Columbia. Good luck getting a ticket if the U.S. team advances through the next two rounds.

# This is the Cold War without the fun

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN  
New York Times News Service

Let’s see, America is prepositioning battle tanks with our East European NATO allies to counterbalance Russia; U.S. and Russian military planes recently flew within 10 feet of each other; Russia is building a new generation of long-range ballistic missiles; and the U.S. and China are jostling in the South China Sea. Did someone restart the Cold War while I was looking the other way? If so, this time it seems like the Cold War without the fun — that is, without James Bond, SMERSH, “Get Smart” Agent 86’s shoe phone, Nikita Khrushchev’s shoe-banging, a race to the moon or a debate between American and Soviet leaders over whose country has the best kitchen appliances. And I don’t think we’re going to see President Barack Obama in Kiev declaring, à la President Kennedy, “ich bin ein Ukrainian.” Also, the lingo of our day — “reset with Russia” or “pivot to Asia” — has none of the gravitas of — drum roll, please — “détente.”

No, this post-post-Cold War has more of a WWE — World Wrestling Entertainment — feel to it, and I don’t just mean President Vladimir Putin of Russia’s riding horses bare-chested, although that is an apt metaphor. It’s just a raw jostling for power for power’s sake — not a clash of influential ideas but rather of spheres of influence: “You cross that line, I punch your nose.” “Why?” “Because I said so.” “You got a problem with that?” “Yes, let me show you my drone. You got a problem with that?” “Not at all. My cyber guys stole the guidance system last week from Northrop Grumman.” “You got a problem with that?”

**No, this post-post-Cold War has more of a World Wrestling Entertainment feel to it**

The Cold War had a beginning, an end and even a closing curtain, with the fall of the Berlin Wall. But the post-post-Cold War has brought us full circle back to the pre-Cold War and the game of nations. There was a moment when it seemed as though it would all be otherwise — when it seemed that Arabs and Israelis would make peace, that China would evolve into a more consensual political system and that Russia would become part of Europe and the G-8. That was a lifetime ago. Now Western reporters struggle to get visas to China, no American businessman with a brain takes his laptop to Beijing, Chinese hackers have more of your personal data now than LinkedIn, Russia is still intent on becoming part of Europe — by annexing a piece here and a piece there — and the G-8 is now the G-1.5 (America and Germany). When did it all go sour? We fired the first shot when we expanded NATO toward the Russian border even though the Soviet Union had disappeared. Message to Moscow: You are always an enemy, no matter what system you have. When oil prices recovered, Putin sought his revenge for this humiliation, but now he’s just using the NATO threat to justify the militarization of Russian society so he and his fellow kleptocrats can stay in power and paint their opponents as lackeys of the West. NATO’s toppling of the Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, the Arab Spring and the Moscow street protests that followed rattled Putin, said Sergei Guriev, the noted Russian economist now based in Paris. “Putin understood that he lost the Russian middle class and so he started to look for legitimacy somewhere else” — in hypernationalism and anti-Americanism.

Thomas L. Friedman

But Guriev makes an important point. “If not for the Western sanctions on Russia, East Ukraine would already have been part of Russia today,” he said, adding that there is nothing Putin fears more than Ukraine succeeding in diminishing corruption and building a modern economy that would be everything Putin’s Russia is not. Guriev is worried, though, that the anti-Western propaganda Putin has been pumping into the veins of the Russian public will have a lasting effect and make his successor even worse. Either way, “Russia will be a big challenge for your next president.” The Chinese leadership is not as dumb or desperate as Putin — and needs access to U.S. markets more — so, for now, China’s leaders still behave with some restraint in asserting their claims in the South China Sea. But the fact is, as the Asia expert Andrew Browne noted in *The Wall Street Journal*, “the U.S.-China relationship has lost its strategic raison d’être: the Soviet Union, the common threat that brought the two countries together.” They have not forged a new one, like being co-managers of global stability. In short, the attraction of the U.S. economy and the bite of U.S. sanctions are more vital than ever in managing the post-post-Cold War game of nations, including bringing Iran to nuclear talks. We may be back to traditional geopolitics, but it’s in a much more interdependent world, where our economic clout is still a source of restraint on Moscow and Beijing. Putin doesn’t disguise his military involvement in Ukraine for nothing; he’s afraid of more U.S. banking sanctions. China doesn’t circumscribe its behavior in the South China Sea for nothing; it can’t grow without exporting to America. It’s not just our guns, it’s our butter. It’s why we should be expanding U.S.-shaped free-trade deals with Asia and Europe and it’s why the most important source of stability in the world today is the health of the U.S. economy. We can walk softly only as long as we carry a big stick — and a big wallet.

# It’s time to apologize for slavery

By TIMOTHY EGAN  
New York Times News Service

A week of absurdity around a confused racial con artist, and a massacre in a black church brings us to this: Friday was the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, when the last of the American slaves were told they were free. Now, to put it to good use, at a time when a post-racial era seems very much out of reach.

The first black man to live in the White House, long hesitant about doing anything bold on the color divide, could make one of the most simple and dramatic moves of his presidency: apologize for the land of the free being, at one time, the largest slaveholding nation on earth. The Confederate battle flag that still flies on the grounds of the State House in South Carolina, cradle of the Civil War, is a reminder that the hatred behind the proclaimed right to own another human being has never left our shores.

An apology would not kill that hatred, but it would ripple, positively, in ways that may be felt for years. As the son of a Kenyan father and a white mother who died more than a century after slavery ended, Barack Obama has little ancestral baggage on this issue. Yet no man could make a stronger statement about America’s original sin than the first African-American president. Conservatives would caw — they always do — and say, get over it, don’t play the race card. Liberals would complain that a simple apology did not go far enough, unless it entailed reparations for the descendants of slaves. But words of contrition — a formal acknowledgment of a grievous wrong

by a great nation — have a power all their own. The British, the Vatican, the Germans and the South Africans have all issued formal apologies for their official cruelties, and each case has had a cleansing, even liberating effect. The U.S. Congress apologized to African-Americans for slavery in 2009, though it came with a caveat that the mea culpa could not be used as legal rationale for reparations. And President Bill Clinton, while in Africa in 1998, apologized for the slave trade, but not for a government that institutionalized white supremacy during its first four score and change. For this year’s Juneteenth — commemorating the day in 1865, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, when a Union general landed in Galveston, Texas, and told the last of the dead-enders in Texas that “all slaves are free” — Obama could close a loop in a terrible history. He could also elevate the current discussion on race, which swirled earlier in the week around the serial liar Rachel Dolezal, and the race-baiting billionaire vanity blimp of Donald Trump. The slaughter of worshippers in a church with long ties to fighting slavery and Jim Crow “raises questions about a dark part of our history,” Obama said Thursday. Questions about why South Carolina can still fly the flag of a traitor nation, a flag apparently embraced by the shooter. Questions rooted in a history that calls for a formal apology. From the time the first Africans arrived as slaves in Jamestown in 1619 through the codification of blacks as three-fifths of a person in the Constitution and up to the eve of the Civil War, when 4 million people were held in bondage, slavery has been the most

Timothy Egan

incongruent element of a people proclaiming to be enlightened. Lincoln said he hated “the monstrous injustice of slavery,” in part because it allowed “enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites.” Countries, religions and corporations sometimes do awful things in their names. It doesn’t diminish them to note their failures, their injustices, their crimes against humanity. It elevates them. When Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain apologized to the Irish in 1997 for England’s role in a famine that killed more than a million people, it opened the door to reconciliation, and a burst of new scholarship and awareness about a genocidal episode long mired in shame. The British government also tried to make good for prosecuting a World War II hero and Nazi code breaker, Alan Turing, for the crime of being gay. It took the Vatican 350 years to apologize for the persecution of the Italian astronomer Galileo. But now the church speaks with authority, backed by science, on climate change — leaving Republicans in the United States in the dungeon of ignorance. Pope John Paul II apologized to Jews for the Vatican’s inaction on the Holocaust and to Muslims killed by crusaders. Last year, Pope Francis reached out to victims of clerical sex abuse and said he was sorry on behalf of the church he leads. President Ronald Reagan signed legislation that provided payments and apologies for the internment, during World War II, of more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans — most of them U.S. citizens. It’s harder to be contrite than to conquer. Obama had nothing to do with slavery. Most Americans, descendants of immigrants shunned in their homelands, have very little connection to the slaveholders of the American South. So why apologize? Because we own this past. As such, we have to condemn it.

**Obama could close a loop in a terrible history.**

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