

Economists Make the Case for a \$15 Minimum Wage in Oregon

By Donovan M. Smith
Of *The Skanner News*

Economists stepped up to the podium at Portland State University on Tuesday voicing their support for lawmakers to make the state minimum wage \$15 an hour.

Financial experts, PSU professors Mary C. King and Robin Hahnel, Lewis and Clark teacher Martin Hart-Landsberg say Oregon's \$9.25 minimum wage is insufficient for average Oregonians.

All Oregonians, King said, will benefit from having an increase to what she called "higher wages at the bottom." The current minimum wage — which \$9.25 per hour in Oregon, two dollars above the federal minimum of \$7.25 — is a disgrace, she said.

According to King, the minimum wage hit its peak value in 1968, when its market value equated in today's economy to \$11 an hour.

"A substantial increase in the minimum wage is long overdue," King said. "In Oregon, we feel good to have a minimum wage of \$9.25. That's still only 84 percent of what our national minimum was half a century ago. This is not the market. This is not inevitable. People have made decisions that have us here, and that's why we have much lower wages at the bottom than

all the other wealthy nations."

Nationally, the minimum wage is lower than in Oregon at \$7.25 an hour. Earlier this year, lawmakers in Salem decided to make the minimum wage for those employed by the state to \$15 an hour.

Landsberg says that in America wages have been staggering to keep up

stock repurchases."

About 17 percent of Oregonians live in poverty. The three economists agreed reducing poverty rates has a number of known benefits that lead to stronger communities including better performance in schools, cuts in teen pregnancy, reduction in crime, and an increase in general wellness.

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with the cost of living for decades and those that have benefitted have mostly been the country's top percent of wage earners.

"People at the top have done well, but most others have not," Landsberg said. "It would be foolish of us to wait for market forces to change market conditions."

Landsberg attacked a popular class and economic platform commonly used by Republicans, theorizing that policies designed to increase profit lead to more reinvestment and rapid growth and henceforth better wages for all.

"Profits have soared and none of the rest has followed," he said. "Firms are not using their money for investment or job creation. The money is going to mergers, higher dividend payouts, and

The Skanner spoke with Hahnel about what implications an increased minimum wage could mean for Black Oregonians, about one-third of whom live in poverty.

Hahnel said because of historic practices, Black people are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs and that the bump to \$15 would be on tool to combat economic racism.

"Blacks are disproportionately at the low-end of the wage spectrum. Raising the minimum wage would, therefore, would have a particularly beneficial effect on reducing, not eliminating, the degree of economic discrimination and exploitation they face."

Hahnel says pressuring local lawmakers through calls and emails to their offices is an effective mode of pushing this agenda through.

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Beaverton Police Run 'Click It or Ticket' Traffic Safety Campaign

Officers from the Beaverton Police Department and other law enforcement agencies throughout Oregon will be working the "Click it or Ticket" seatbelt enforcement campaign, which will begin Aug. 24, 2015 and will continue through Sept. 6. The focus of this campaign is seatbelt use, booster seats, distracted driving involving cell phones and speeding. The goal of this campaign is to reduce traffic injuries and deaths by increased education and enforcement.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages one through twelve years old. Child car seats increase crash survival by 71 percent for infants under 1 year old and by up to 59 percent for toddlers aged 1 to 4. Booster seats reduce the chance of nonfatal injury among four- to eight-year-olds by 45 percent compared to safety belts alone.

A child weighing less than 40 pounds must be properly restrained in a child safety seat. A child under one year of age or weighing less than twenty pounds must be restrained in a rear-facing child seat. A child over forty pounds but under age eight or less than 4' 9" tall must be restrained in either a child seat with harness system or in a booster seat that raises the child up so that a lap and shoulder belt system fit correctly.

The Beaverton Police Department holds free child safety seat clinics throughout the year. The next clinic will be from 9 a.m. to noon Sept. 19 at the Kuni Cadillac collision Center located at 3725 SW Cedar Hills Blvd, Beaverton, OR 97005. The last car will be accepted at 11:30 a.m.

Speeding and driver impairment are the most common causes of injury crashes. Oregon's safety belt overtime enforcement program is committed to reducing the severity of crash injuries by promoting proper safety belt and child restraint use.

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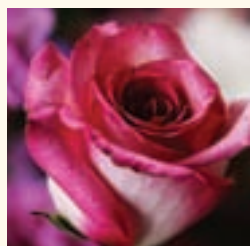
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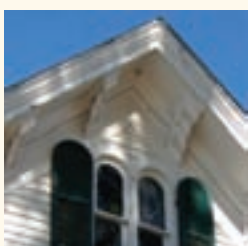
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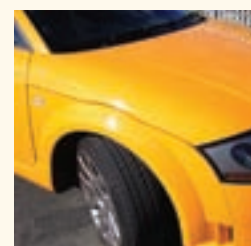
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