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KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Minimum wage bill has too much downside

The Oregon Legislature has passed a three-tiered minimum wage bill, and Gov. Kate Brown is set to sign it.

The only thing good that can be said about it is that it is better than alternatives earlier proposed by lawmakers, and much better than a hike to \$15 touted by proponents who are gathering signatures for a November ballot initiative.

In Oregon, proponents of hiking the minimum wage say \$9.25 an hour just isn't enough for workers to meet their minimum living expenses, particularly in high-priced Portland.

The bill passed was presented as a compromise to an across-the-board hike.

Under the bill, the minimum wage all across Oregon will climb in July to \$9.75 per hour. It will climb at regular intervals, but at different rates depending on the locale, through 2022.

In rural areas like ours — the proverbial third tier — the minimum wage gradually will climb to \$12.50. Those areas include Umatilla, Morrow, Malheur, Lake, Harney, Wheeler, Sherman, Gilliam, Wallowa, Grant, Jefferson, Baker, Union, Crook, Klamath, Douglas, Coos and Curry counties.

The minimum will rise to \$14.75 in 2022 within the "first tier" Portland urban growth boundary, which includes parts of Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. It will rise to \$13.50 in Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Deschutes, Hood River, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Tillamook, Wasco and Yamhill counties, and parts of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties outside Portland's urban growth boundary.

There are measurable differences in the economies of various locales

within the state. Portland is far more robust and diversified than John Day. Employers in Oregon's "rural" communities will have an easier time dealing with a minimum wage of \$12.50 rather than \$14.75.

But a business' location does not determine its ability to pay a higher wage. Low-margin businesses struggle no matter where they are located, particularly if they compete with people who have lower labor costs.

Hood River fruit growers who will pay \$13.50 won't get more for their fruit than growers in Umatilla County who will pay \$12.50. Nurseries within Portland's urban growth boundary paying \$14.75 will be at a competitive disadvantage with nurseries down the road but outside the boundary paying \$13.50.

Eastern Oregon onion packers, who will pay the lowest rate, say they already struggle to compete against packers in Idaho who pay \$7.25. They promise to move east.

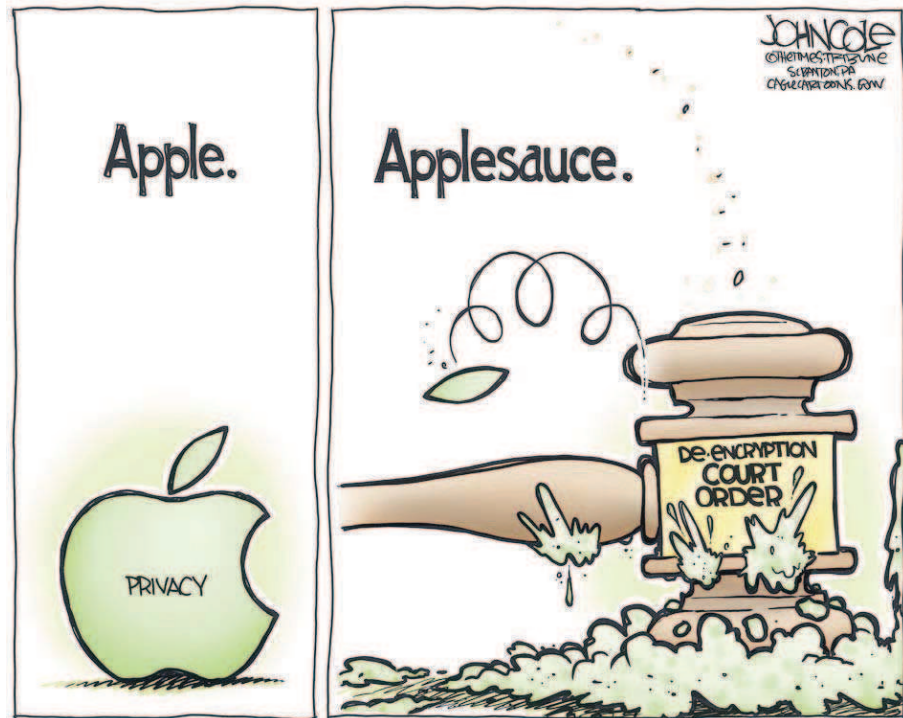
None of that could matter if 15 Now Oregon makes good on its promise to put an initiative on November's ballot that would increase the minimum wage to \$15 statewide by 2019. Obviously, this would be far more ruinous.

Proponents suggest businesses can easily absorb a wage increase or just hike prices. They say no one will lose their job or have their hours cut. Those people also likely have never covered a payroll or sold a product.

It's a laudable goal to raise the prospects of unskilled workers. Pricing them out of the job market isn't the way to do it.

We would all be better off by promoting policies that encourage the creation of better-paying jobs, and facilitate the training of workers to fill them.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS



'OF COURSE I'M A CHRISTIAN! - CAN'T YOU SEE THE LITTLE FISH THINGY ON MY BUMPER??!!'

Clash of the populists

The Book of Daniel predicted it. The Book of Revelation confirmed it. The Necronomicon spelled it out in language too terrible for human ears to hear. And if you read "The Art of the Deal" backward in the original Sanskrit, you'll find it foretold there as well: Before the seventh seal is opened, before Famine and Pestilence are loosed, the Man in White must do battle with the Combed-Over Titan, amid the ravishing shrieks of Twitter and beneath the unblinking eye of Cable News.

Or, for the less mystically inclined: It was only a matter of time before Pope Francis tangled with Donald Trump.

Their war of words came about the way you would expect. It began with a rambling news conference on the papal plane, where Francis suggested that Trump (or at least his zeal for an amazing border wall) "is not Christian." It escalated with a rambling news release from the mogul turned presidential candidate, which Trump-splained to the pope that only a Trump administration can protect the Vatican from ISIS.

Then came the inevitable downplaying from Vatican officials, the inevitable turnabout from Trump ("the Pope is a wonderful guy," he told CNN), the inevitable debates about whether the Vatican's own walls are un-Christian, whether Protestant voters in the South Carolina primary are still suspicious of popery, and more.

The obvious drama of the collision lay in the contrasts between the two men: The celibate and the lecher, the ascetic and the billionaire, the mystic and the frank materialist. But their similarities are also fascinating. For all the ways in which Francis and Trump differ, as figures on the global stage they're also strangely alike — in the forces that they're channeling, their style of public salesmanship, and their relationship to the institutions they either head or aspire to lead.

This resemblance begins, as Matthew Schmitz pointed out in *The Washington Post*, with their status as "outsiders bent on shaking up their establishments," which they (and many others) deem sclerotic and corrupt. When Trump attacks Republican elites and breaks with party orthodoxy on trade or foreign policy or campaign finance, Schmitz notes, he's mirroring the way that Francis "challenges a hidebound Vatican bureaucracy and flirts with revising settled Catholic doctrine." Both messages appeal to the same exhaustion with institutions, the same desire to somehow "make a mess" (as Francis likes to put it) and start anew.

This mirroring extends to their rhetoric, where both men have a fondness for, well, name-calling that's rare among presidential candidates and popes. The insults differ: Trump calls people "low energy," "liar" and "loser," while Francis prefers "Pharisee" and "self-absorbed Promethean neo-Pelagian"



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

(though he's not above "whiner" and "sourpuss" as well). But their pungent language reflects a shared mastery of the contemporary media environment, in which controversy and unpredictability are the great currencies, and having people constantly asking "Did he really just say that?" is the surest ticket to the world's attention.

The public style that produces these "say what?" moments can get them both into a kind of trouble. But the billionaire and the pontiff both seem to believe — on some evidence — that a little troublemaking is the best way to make the disaffected pay attention.

And by reaching people who usually tune out churchmen and politicians, they have become leading populists in our increasingly populist moment. The popular constituencies they speak for are very different, of course. Trump is a nationalist, speaking on behalf of the unhappy Western working class, while Francis is a Latin American and a globalist, speaking for the developing world's poor — which is why immigration policy naturally puts them at loggerheads.

But they nonetheless share a common enemy: Not just specific guardians of business as usual, whether Catholic or Republican, but the wider Western ruling class. Whether it's the Donald attacking "the very, very stupid people" making policy in the United States, or Francis deploring the greed and self-interest of rich nations and wealthy corporations, the pope and the mogul are now leading critics of the neoliberalism that has governed the West for a generation or more.

Neoliberalism needs critics, as the Republican Party needs reinvention and the Catholic Church needs reform. At the same time, as Schmitz notes, what both Trump and Francis promise — deliverance "from inconvenient and unresponsive institutions, with all their strictures and corruptions" — downplays the value of rules, customs, and traditions in protecting people from the rule of novelty and whim.

This is always populism's peril: That it relies too much on the power of charisma, and tears down too much in the quest to make America or Catholic Christianity great again.

Of course neither Francis nor Trump have broken anything yet. The populist pope may be remembered as a great reformer, and the populist billionaire as the unlikely catalyst for the Republican Party's long-delayed reform.

But for now, the last thing they have in common in this: Everything that makes them interesting makes them dangerous as well.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. His column appears every Sunday. Previously, he was a senior editor at *The Atlantic*.

YOUR VIEWS

The Super Bowl and white people

I read David Burns' letter in the Feb. 19 edition of the *East Oregonian*. After recovering from the stroke his Neanderthal thinking caused, I'm still at a loss how to respond. First, I'm an old white guy so I think Mr. Burns and I are in the same demographic. I remember the days of Jim Brown, Bart Starr and Johnny Unitas fondly also, but I have a somewhat different take on them. While Mr. Burns has shown himself to be a knowledgeable, if fickle, football fan, he seems to forget that Jim Brown was always an outspoken advocate for black athletes and black people in general. He had to be because the playing field was tilted steeply in favor of white people.

That's the reason Tommie Smith and John Carlos made their fists raised gesture at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968. While still controversial, many white people honor them for their courageous statement. As to his objections to the "hands up, don't shoot" dance move, the events in Ferguson, Mo., are not as clear-cut as Mr. Burns would have you believe. We do know that an unarmed black man (thug or not), Michael Brown, was shot to death by a white police officer, Darren Wilson. It's racists like David Burns that make black people feel the need to

keep this issue in the public consciousness. I'm sure the NFL scheduled the Super Bowl to coincide with 50th anniversary of the Black Panther Party just to get under Mr. Burns' skin.

Four hundred words do not allow me to adequately respond to each of Mr. Burns' statements. I will repeat what I said the first time I responded to a letter from this man: He needs to pay attention to what Homer Simpson is doing at the Springfield nuclear power plant because when he ventures beyond that it's embarrassing.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

Palmer election loss would be poetic justice

Voters, ponder this possibility: Given the Justice Department investigation of (Grant County Sheriff Glenn) Palmer, if Palmer is re-elected, will Palmer cause legal problems against which the county may have to defend itself by using tax dollars? Will voters literally put their tax money where their vote is — and possibly cause their taxes to increase — by voting for Palmer?

If the Palmer investigation rules against him, may it [1] end Palmer's re-election, [2] end his being elected to any public office anywhere by Palmer losing the credibility necessary for election to public office, and [3] end his chance of ever being

hired in law enforcement anywhere again? If so, then Palmer can thank the Bundy "Patriot" criminals for his possible chronic unemployment and his family's possible bankruptcy. Talk about poetic justice.

If Palmer loses, then talk about citizen action against government officials; talk about the people taking back their government; talk about ground-swell Constitutional action; talk about true patriotic practice; talk about political empowerment; talk about real revolution by that bastion of freedom known as the "Vote Keepers;" talk about overwhelming occupation by that protector of liberty known as the "97%"; talk about poetic justice; talk about true justice.

If Palmer loses, and if Bundy "Patriot" criminals signed Palmer's Constitution copy, then Palmer can read why he lost the election, why he lost his job, and why he lost his future every single time he reads their signatures in his Constitution copy. Talk about poetic justice.

Palmer shall find out his real sentence,

which shall be imposed on him by the jury of his peers — voters — on election day. If he loses, then we already know what his reply may be: "AMBUSH!"

Brian McDonough
Bennington, N.H.

John Turner plugged in, ready to run for mayor

We are pleased that John Turner has decided to run for mayor of Pendleton. John brings the important traits of integrity, service, commitment, and leadership. After a distinguished career as an officer in the Marine Corps, John worked for 10 years at Blue Mountain Community College, serving as president for nine of these years. He currently is a member of the Port of Umatilla, The Round-Up City Corporation, and Rotary. In a few words, John gets things done. Please vote to make John Turner the next mayor of Pendleton!

Paul and Mary Davis
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.