

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Wage hike will help, hurt some

Who is getting a raise tomorrow? More than 100,000 Oregonians are, as the state takes its first incremental step in increasing the minimum wage. In our area the increase is just a quarter, moving from \$9.25 an hour to \$9.50. In the Portland metro area, the increase jumps to \$9.75. It's just the first step down the road to a minimum wage of \$12.50 in rural areas and \$14.75 in urban areas by 2022.

The effects of the increase will be varied. It will benefit some employees by giving them a spike in take-home pay, but cause others to see their hours cut and still others to lose their jobs entirely. It will benefit some businesses — increasing the reliability and the happiness of their employees and allowing them to attract better workers. But it will likely decimate others, especially labor-intensive ones who employ a lot of poor Americans, who will not be able to keep pace with the steady increase of labor costs.

We've been lukewarm on the state's minimum wage hike, noting it as a relatively ineffective way of benefiting the middle class. The

same people who call trickle-down economics a bunch of hokey think that trickle-up economics will benefit us all. If a rising tide lifts all boats, why should we care if the water comes from above or below?

## The experiment begins tomorrow.

We must also note that only about 5 percent of Oregonians make the minimum wage, according to the state Employment Department. Most are young women who work part-time.

We have data on small increases in the minimum wage, and note they have a relatively small impact on the economy. It sparks economic growth in small ways, raises the cost of goods a small amount and causes little harm.

But we don't have good data on major, consistent minimum wage hikes. It just hasn't occurred in this country. And that unknown worries economists and business owners, and it should worry employees.

The experiment begins tomorrow. Fingers crossed, it will make the state a more equal and affluent place. But the risks are real, and Oregon businesses will be forced to adapt to a quickly and continuously changing labor market.

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

# Government must insist on high standards for nation's railways

The (Salem) Statesman Journal

Broken bolts in the railroad track caused the frightening oil train derailment in the Columbia River Gorge. Better brakes and other improvements would have made the train derailment less severe.

Those are among the Federal Railroad Administration's preliminary findings into the June 3 derailment, in which a Union Pacific train spilled oil and caught fire near the town of Mosier.

Union Pacific, which is to blame for the derailment, now seems overly eager to resume oil trains through the Gorge.

But people have it wrong when they cite the Gorge's unique environment as a rationale to make it permanently off-limits to oil trains, such as this one with 94 cars carrying Bakken crude oil from New Town, North Dakota, to Tacoma, Washington.

Scary, hazardous materials travel every day on trains and trucks along the interstate 84 and 5 corridors. Many such trains go through Salem's core, past Willamette University and the Capitol

Mall area. Certainly the protection of urban residents and property is as important as protection of the rural environment and the rural residents.

## Consider the alternatives to oil trains.

The greater issue is that Oregon and especially the federal government must insist on much higher standards for:

- Track maintenance.
- Structural

improvements in rail cars carrying oil or other hazardous materials.

• Training and equipping of emergency responders.

If people dislike oil trains, consider the alternatives: pipelines or multiple shipments by truck. In much of America, well-built and -operated pipelines are the best solution. But given the lack of sufficient pipelines in the Pacific Northwest, trains are the best option.

As for ending the world's reliance on oil, and thus the need to ship oil, that is a worthy goal but one that will not happen soon. Even then, companies and governments will continue shipping other hazardous materials.

Safe, secure shipping always will be needed, regardless of the route or cargo. The government must ensure that safety.

## Wilderness surveillance will help everyone behave

A pound of water at 100 degrees contains eight times as much heat as a pound of steel at 100 degrees. This high "specific heat" enables water heated by geothermal activity thousands of feet underground to pour out of Cougar Hot Spring at 112 degrees. Fortunately, a cool stream ten feet away makes it possible for hot springs to adjust the pools to the perfect temperature, creating a meditative paradise.

There occurred a problem however, with wild nighttime parties, and the pools were closed at night. So now, each evening, soakers must hurry out to the parking lot or have to deal with stone-faced police officers just for harmoniously meditating in magical pools under gigantic trees standing witness to the inevitability of time.

Conservatives argue that society must keep strict control over these free spirits because of their tendency to take off their clothes and smoke marijuana. Conservatives forget, however, that they have wild stallions of their own.

And liberals in turn contend that motocross race bikes emanate too much machismo, causing peaceful forest users to get worked up. And since they are "clearly dangerous," these mighty steeds simply cannot be allowed on logging roads. Yet there exists this wonderful possibility — what if dirt bikes were actually allowed on

the dirt roads?

Fantastic adventure would become possible, and video surveillance could make that a reality.

The logging roads could be opened up to dirt bikes and quads on the condition that riders mount cameras on their front forks, which transmit video to receivers on nearby mountaintops, which then relay the video to police headquarters. And perhaps Cougar Hot Spring could be kept open, if not all night, then at least until a reasonable hour if hot springs would become agreeable to reasonable use of surveillance cameras at the pools.

A little openness can provide a huge amount of freedom. In fact, video surveillance is as good as keeping the forests safe as the high specific heat of water is at delivering geothermal energy to the surface.

Pat Hiatt  
Ellensburg, Wash.

## Owyhee Canyonlands are worth protecting

Last week I flew 2,500 miles to Washington, D.C., to urge our elected officials to protect something dear to my heart: the Owyhee Canyonlands. Resting in southeastern Oregon, the Owyhee is an expansive backcountry with astonishing scenery, abundant wildlife, and tons of elbow room.

When I was in D.C., I thanked senators



## OTHER VIEWS

# Revolt of the masses

Anybody who spends time in the working-class parts of America (and, one presumes, Britain) notices the contagions of drug addiction and suicide, and the feelings of anomie, cynicism, pessimism and resentment.

Part of this pain arises from deindustrialization. Good jobs are hard to find. But hardship is not exactly new to these places. Life in, say, a coal valley was never a bouquet of roses.

What's also been lost is the social institutions and cultural values that made it possible to have self-respect amid hardship — to say, "I may not make a lot of money, but people can count on me. I'm loyal, tough, hardworking, resilient and part of a good community."

We all have a sense of what that working-class honor code was, but if you want a refresher, I recommend J.D. Vance's new book "Hillbilly Elegy." Vance's family is from Kentucky and Ohio, and his description of the culture he grew up in is essential reading for this moment in history.

He describes a culture of intense group loyalty. Families might be messed up in a million ways, but any act of disloyalty — like sharing personal secrets with outsiders — is felt acutely. This loyalty culture helps people take care of their own, but it also means there can be hostility to those who want to move up and out. And there can be intense parochialism.

"We do not like outsiders," Vance writes, "or people who are different from us, whether difference lies in how they look, how they act, or, most important, how they talk."

It's also a culture that values physical toughness. It's a culture that celebrates people who are willing to fight to defend their honor. This is something that progressives never get about gun control. They see a debate about mass murder, but for many people guns are about a family's ability to stand up for itself in a dangerous world.

It's also a culture with a lot of collective pride. In my travels, you can't go five minutes without having a conversation about a local sports team. Sports has become the binding religion, offering identity, value, and solidarity.

Much of this pride is nationalistic. Vance's grandparents, he writes, "taught me that we live in the best and greatest country on earth. This fact gave meaning to my childhood."

When I lived in Brussels, this sort of intense personal patriotism was simply not felt by the people who ran the EU, but it was felt by a lot of people in the member states.

This honor code has been decimated lately.



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

Conservatives argue that it has been decimated by cosmopolitan cultural elites who look down on rural rubes. There's some truth to this, as the reactions of smug elites to the Brexit vote demonstrate.

But the honor code has also been decimated by the culture of the modern meritocracy, which awards status to the individual who works with his mind, and devalues the class of people who work with their hands.

Most of all, it has been undermined by rampant consumerism, by celebrity culture, by reality-TV fantasies that tell people success

## What has been lost is the social institutions and cultural values that made it possible to have self-respect amid hardship.

comes in a quick flash of publicity, not through steady work. The sociologist Daniel Bell once argued that capitalism would undermine itself because it encouraged hedonistic short-term values for consumers while requiring self-disciplined long-term values in its workers. At least in one segment of society, Bell was absolutely correct.

There's now a rift within the working class between mostly older people who are self-disciplined, respectable and, often, bigoted, and

parts of a younger cohort that are more disordered, less industrious, more celebrity-obsessed, but also more tolerant and open to the world.

Trump (and probably Brexit) voters are in the first group. They are not poor, making on average over \$70,000 a year. But they perceive that their grandchildren's world is quickly coming apart.

From 1945 to 1995, conservative and liberal elites shared variations of the same vision of the future. Liberals emphasized multilateral institutions and conservatives emphasized free trade. Either way, the future would be global, integrated and multiethnic.

But the elites pushed too hard, and now history is moving in the opposite direction. The less-educated masses have a different conception of the future, a vision that is more closed, collective, protective and segmented.

Their pain is indivisible: economic stress, community breakdown, ethnic bigotry and a loss of social status and self-worth. When people feel their world is vanishing, they are easy prey for fact-free magical thinking and demagogues who blame immigrants.

We need a better form of nationalism, a vision of patriotism that gives dignity to those who have been disrespected, emphasizes that we are one nation and is confident and open to the world. I'm thinking we have a lot to learn from Theodore Roosevelt, but that's a topic for another day.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in 2003.

## YOUR VIEWS

Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley for introducing legislation to preserve the Owyhee for future generations. Their bill would safeguard the Owyhee from future mining and oil and gas development. It also supports federal grants to ranchers, grazing associations, and local fire protection districts. It is a start, but only a start.

I know how special the Owyhee is. I grew up hunting bobwhite quail in North Carolina, but whenever I go back home I am saddened that there are very few quail or places to hunt birds left in the South — those treasured pastimes of my teens are fading memories for all but the very wealthy.

Today, the Owyhee Canyonlands is my sacred place. I have a home in the Owyhee, and spend many days behind bird dogs, riding a horse, enjoying the howl of a coyote, or the incredible brilliance of the Milky Way — and dreading the next flat tire.

The Owyhee is home to over 200 species, like pronghorn antelope, kit fox, greater sage-grouse, and California bighorn sheep. Its vastness makes it a rare and unique

treasure where wildlife is truly wild, unlike the windshield fauna of many western parks. I can hunt a different ridge or canyon every day of chukar season and never see even another human track.

My neighbors in Malheur County, many of them ranchers, and I seem to share a common goal: We want the Owyhee to stay as it is, where freedom does not need to be explained, and the Owyhee's wild vastness and remoteness stays downright scary to most civilized folks.

It is time to safeguard the Owyhee and preserve this special place as it is today. It is certainly worthy of permanent protection. Hunters, ranchers, boaters, campers and hikers all have a stake in conserving the Owyhee. There is simply nothing like it in the lower 48 states.

How do we do this and preserve all its current values? I don't know, but I am quite certain there is a way if we try, and in the process, listen to each other.

Jim Hammett  
John Day

## 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.