

Overtime rule promises more than it will deliver

The president wants to change the rules on when workers are eligible for overtime pay. And as with attempts to increase the minimum wage, he wrongly assumes that government can increase worker income by fiat where there is no corresponding increase in economic output.

The Fair Labor Standards Act mandates that hourly wage earners be paid time-and-a-half when they work more than 40 hours in a regular work week. The act exempts salaried and some hourly workers — managers, executives, administrative staff and professionals — from receiving overtime if they meet narrowly defined criteria and are paid at least \$455 a week. That's \$23,660 a year.

The criteria, including the wage levels, are set by Department of Labor regulations. The president wants to increase the minimum salary to \$970 per week, or \$50,440. The president also proposes mechanisms that would increase that minimum automatically over time.

The administration said as many as 5 million U.S. workers will become eligible for overtime under the rule, and will collectively receive more than \$1.2 billion in extra earnings.

"It's one of the single most important steps we can take to help grow middle-class wages," the president said.

A lobster in every pot, and a unicorn in every garage. While it makes a great headline, unless the president is writing checks he can't guarantee anyone a pay raise.

The operative word in all of this is "eligible."

Though many politicians would have us believe otherwise, businesses don't have a magic pot of money that fills up to meet new government mandates. And they don't employ people as part of a social welfare scheme, but to accomplish work that contributes to the profitability of the business.

Aren't there some employers who take advantage and classify workers as "exempt" just to cheat them out of overtime? Yes, unfortunately, there are. But most employers are fair, and try to offer pay competitive in the local market commensurate with the duties performed.

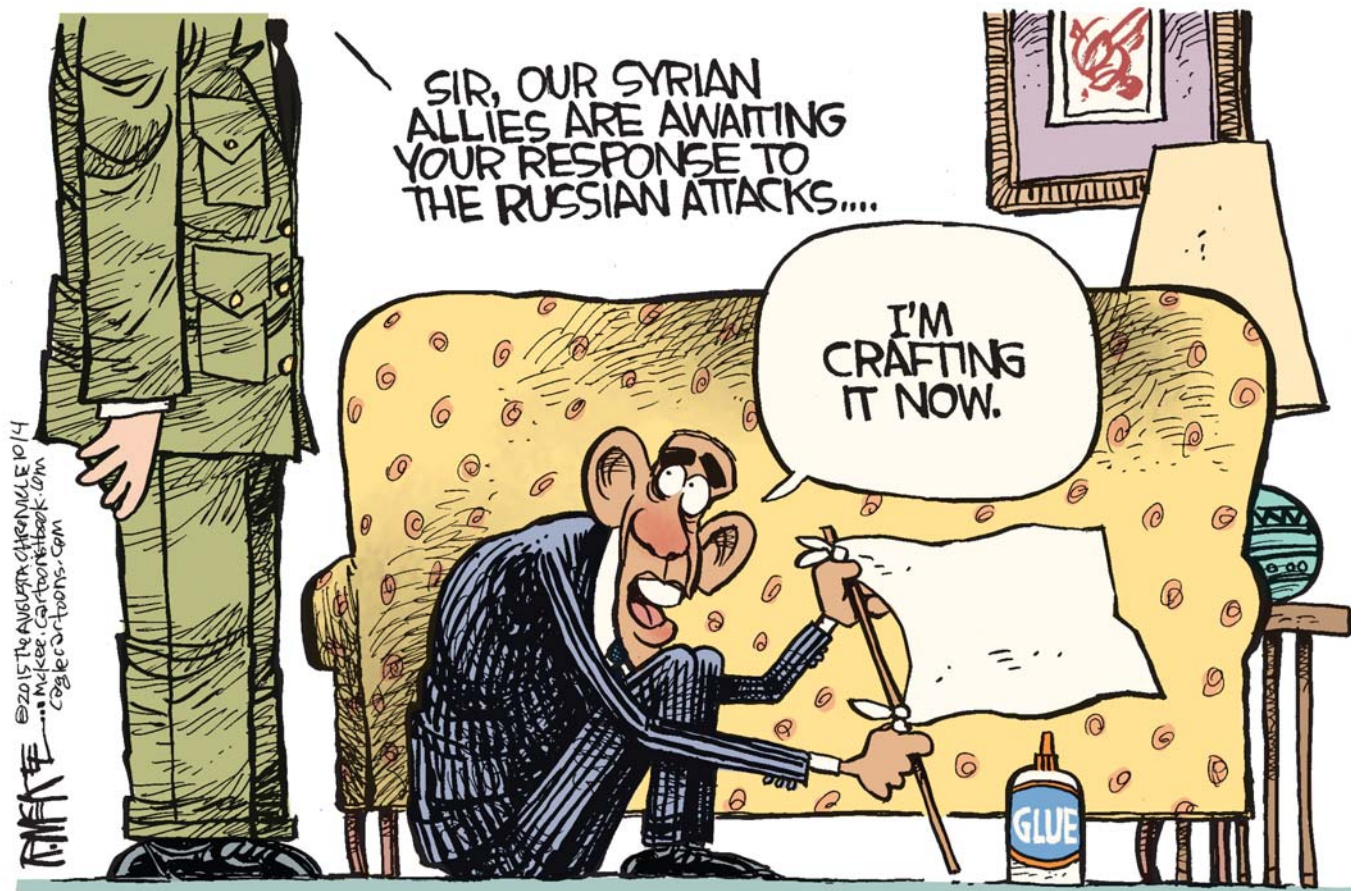
This mandate raises no new revenue, delivers no new customers, produces no additional goods or services. So rather than get a pay increase, most workers will probably see their base wage fall so that everything remains equal.

The assistant manager working 50 hours now and making \$35,000 as a salaried employee will still work 50 hours and make \$35,000 as an hourly employee.

And if it did the math on its own figures, the administration knows this. That \$1.2 billion in extra wages averages out to \$240 per new eligible worker. Hardly the stuff that middle class dreams are made of.

All Americans could use more money in their paycheck. But most Americans are smart enough to know that won't happen unless there's more money coming into the business. Too bad the president and his advisers haven't figured that out.

EDITORIAL
The voice of the Chieftain



Mistake leads to success

I've always found elk meat a little salty for my taste. But that was probably from the tears of frustration running off my face while eating elk somebody else brought home. Years of unsuccessful bowhunting did seem to educate me a little bit each season. Not to brag, but some of those paper airplanes I made out of unused elk tags could really fly. The learning curve for pursuing elk with a bow and arrow taught me last year I should probably get a rifle tag for a cow if I wanted decent odds at eating elk meat I got on my own. But I finally made the right mistakes this year. Success. Still tastes pretty salty, but tears of joy have a higher salinity.

First good mistake I made this year was forgetting to put in for a rifle hunt. Those application deadlines somehow come up faster than elk run away after they get your wind. I've gone the route of applying real early, sometimes drawn good tags and of course had some conflict pop up so the only time I had to use the tag was folding another paper airplane after the deadline went by. I guess I don't mind supporting my pals at Fish & Wildlife.

The best mistake I made this year was either not packing enough water, not



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

bringing along my water filter to make more, or not rationing the water I did have. But it was tough. On the day in question my hunting partner ran short of water by the middle of the day. I had been sharing some beef jerky I made, which was very salty. Whoops. He was set to hike back to our camp to reacquify, but allowed me talk him into sharing my water. He was polite about it, though, and barely took any so after we split up all I could think about was how thirsty he must be. That just made me thirsty and soon enough I was out of water myself. The timing wasn't great. Animals would be on the move soon, headed for water, and that's all I could think about myself.

Just as I was dropping down the trail back to camp I got into a group of cows. They moved into the timber. A stout bugle came from a bull wondering where everybody was going. I bugled back. No call waiting. He got right back to me. Oh,

man. I set up and here he comes, antler tips weaving through the forest. The tachometer on my heart rate went into the red. My adrenal glands had to open up a factory overseas to meet demand. This. This is what all the practice arrows and preparation and paper airplanes are about. Here he comes, out into the open, almost, except for that little Charlie Brown Christmas tree he's standing behind, blocking the shot. It's probably a good thing I didn't get that 5 point bull. He wouldn't have rewritten any record books, but I'd need a neck brace right now to support my big head if that had been my first elk with a bow.

An hour later I'd circled around, set up and tried calling him in again. I could hear two elk coming. The first to show was a young spike and there was no little tree in the way. It's like Thanksgiving each time I prepare this elk meat. I also get surprisingly thirsty and pour a tall glass of water while cooking, remembering the hours of being parched out there while taking care of the meat before the long hike back to camp in the dark. Rarely have I been that thirsty, that tired, or that content.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist for the Chieftain.

In support of Wallowa Valley Orchestra

To the Editor,

Another exciting season for the Wallowa Valley Orchestra is under way. We are a group of local musicians, of all ages and skill levels, who enjoy getting together weekly for a short time and rehearsing a variety of music with conductors, R. Lee Friese and Randy Morgan, in preparation for a local concert.

There are many benefits to this group. We continue to learn our craft, with help from each other and instruction as necessary. There is always someone available who can advise or teach an aspect of the piece that you may be struggling with. No matter how long you've played your instrument or been able to read music, there is always something more to learn.

We are continuing and encouraging traditions for future generations. No one wants to lose any aspect of a culture, playing music together helps maintain a classical format of rehearsal and performance that is not often available to a local area. Normally, you would go to a performance in a metropolitan area and see a final product, but it's not often an opportunity comes to you or seeks participation on a local level. Another side of participation is the audience, without that feature, there would be no reason to hold a concert. We believe the audience is one of the most important aspects of a concert.

The time you invested learning to play an instrument as a child isn't necessarily lost as an adult. Someone who might not have played for many years is able to start again regardless of age or ability. A little time practicing, a little encouragement from peers, time spent re-exercising memories, produces amazing results that might surprise and please you. Music encourages brain health and stimulates mental growth, and regardless of physical ability you can generally continue to play an instrument.

The musicians of the Wallowa Valley Orchestra would like to extend an invitation to join us, as a participant preparing for the October 25 concert or as an audience member. We'd also like to invite you to visit a rehearsal if you'd be interested in seeing how we put things together. We rehearse Tuesday evenings at Enterprise High School band room, 6:30 - 8 p.m.. If you'd like more information regarding our organization, contact the Inland Northwest Musicians at (541) 289-4696. You can also find us at www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com and on



facebook as Wallowa Valley Orchestra and Inland Northwest Musicians.

Kathy Vernam
Wallowa Valley Orchestra,
Inland Northwest Musicians
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Progress with rails and trails

To the Editor,

My late mother described inertia as "the property of a body at rest to stay at rest and the property of a body in motion to stay in motion," and it's the former half of that definition that's generated so much opposition to the Feasibility Study months from being completed regarding the proposed Rails and Trails between Wallowa and Union counties.

In December, results from that study coordinated by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and students from Eastern Oregon University will be presented to the body with ultimate control regarding the future of that possibility: Wallowa Union Railroad Authority's Board of Directors.

While interested parties pro and anti to the Rails/Trails concept consistently have gathered to voice opinions about whether or not that proposed 64-mile bicycle/pedestrian path should be built along a mostly abandoned railroad line, both democratic logic and economic realism are quietly morphing into what could become an equitable solution.

I've attended several public meetings on the matter and both watched and listened as quiet proponents and vocal opponents sitting at respective tables complied with and decried the efforts of Rocky Houston from Parks and EOU student Dana Kurtz as they outlined the latest status of the Feasibility Study.

And, subtly, I see progress being made.

Though friends I've grown up with often claim it's a done deal, that Houston and party are ramming what they don't want down their throats without hearing their voices, I disagree.

The last meeting I attended described five different styles of trail that could be implemented if construction is feasible and desired by WURA, and my under-

standing was—both to meet the desired wishes of landowners within Wallowa County and to reduce overall expenses to build such a trail—the proposed route through the Wallowa Valley would leave the railroad line and utilize existing roadways.

This wouldn't keep those doggone foreigners from coming to Wallowa County, but shy of building the Great Wall of China to border us off, it might be an equitable solution.

And yet, as Houston says at every meeting, all they're doing is gathering information to provide WURA's board with data from which to advance or derail a proposed plan.

Rocky Wilson
Wallowa

Either side spends with little regard

To the Editor,

"We don't like taxes." ("It's mine, my money, keep your hands off it."). This seems to be a core principle of Republicans at this time. However they do like spending, e.g. a bottomless pocketbook for all things militaristic.

The Republicans and Democrats spend with little regard to how it all gets paid for.

The suggested solutions are reaffirming of their respective "ideologies." Democrats would raise taxes and pronounce hollow words about reduced spending.

Republicans think less taxes on everyone will equate to more individual wealth and consumer spending, thus actuating increased production (growth) to satisfy consumer demand. This plan necessitates less spending to compensate for lost revenue, and the hollow words of the Democrats on this subject are given form and substance by some Republicans with the intent of cutting social programs significantly.

Another group of Republicans, joined vigorously by Democrats, maintains ending loopholes in the tax system will compensate for reduced revenue. And it would, mostly. The idea has been floating around for years, and for obvious reasons, there are no specifics about which tax loopholes must go and which may stay.

Debt and deficit are procrastinations, albeit with wringing of hands. As long as there is a tomorrow, there lies the solution.

Patrick Dunroven
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