

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.

CORRECTIONS

In the July 1 story, "Marijuana faces hazy future in Grant County" the Juicy Tree address was incorrect. The business is located at 135 E. Main in John Day. We apologize for the error.

Grant County Health Fair organizer Chris Yriate, who is retired from the Forest Service, clarified that she has volunteered for the health fair since its beginning 21 years ago, but started as the lead organizer a few years ago.



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FARMER'S FATE

Singing the summer diet duet, down on the farm

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

It's summertime. And that means farming is in full swing. Irrigation is running, the equipment is running at high gear, the animals are heading out to summer pasture, and everywhere you turn you see itty bitty, teeny weeny, little polka dot bikinis.

That's right, it's swimsuit season.

Not wanting to miss out on the pain of swimsuit shopping, I found a black and white polka dot one I liked, and went to try it on. I quickly realized my caloric intake outnumbered the polka dots. Guess it's time for a little spring cleaning ... starting with the refrigerator.

My husband came home just as I was starting the cleaning process.

"The horror," his face seemed to cry. And that began our spring diet dialogue.

Me: We're overweight.
Him: We're under tall.

Me: Nothing wrong with exercise.



Brianna Walker

Him: Nothing wrong with extra size.

Me: We should work out more.
Him: We should cook out more.

Me: The road to health is paved with good intentions.
Him: The road to the kitchen is full of new dimensions.

Me: Here's a dumbbell.
Him: You are the dumbbell.

Me: How about a stationary bike?
Him: I just sat in a stationary car...

Me: Buns of steel.
Him: Mmmm ... buns of cinnamon, with sugar, and frosting ...

"Well, at least you'll never have to worry about your abs of steels setting off the airport metal detector," I snorted at him.

"I don't need exercise," he told me, "I already have the body of a god. It's not my fault you don't like Buddha."

I rolled my eyes.

"I don't need to limit my dairy," he continued, "because I'm saving up for a triple bypass. So why should I exercise? When I can just save up for a lap band?"

The only exercise my husband seems to enjoy is sidestepping the issue, pushing his luck and over-working his brain to think up excuses for not having to work out.

That evening I went jogging alone, all the while thinking about that cute polka dot bikini. After all, running is a strenuous exercise which would help convert fats, sugars and starches — into aches, pains and cramps. The next day I was going to go jogging again, but as I picked up my sneakers, my toes voted against me 10 to 1. I may have flabby thighs, but at least my stomach covers them.

The next morning, I finally found an exercise we could do together: Up 1, 2, 3; down 1, 2, 3 ... And then the other eyelid.

Brianna Walker writes occasionally about the Farmer's Fate in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Applause for 1862 Celebration

To the Editor:

I applaud the people of Canyon City at this year's 1862 celebration. What a great way to honor the past through those lying in the cemeteries!

I remember Blanche Hicks was involved in my Sunday School class at St. Thomas Church. I worked as a boy for her son Prentiss at his bottling works.

While Louisa Sewell had died before my time, I recall my mother's brother, Cliff Mulcare, who worked in Seneca, would come to Canyon City occasionally on weekends. He would take me, as a 6-year-old, to pass the time with him. We would sit outside and talk to his friends. Tom Sewell, one of Louisa Sewell's sons, was a special favorite of Uncle Cliff and me. Tom had worked as a teamster with my grandfather's brother, John Pat Mulcare.

I see other familiar names in the Blue Mountain Eagle article, and look forward to next year's celebration.

Larry Gale Valade
Fredericksburg, Va.

Trails group appreciates response

To the Editor:

The Grant County Chapter (GCC) of COTA (Central Oregon Trail Alliance) greatly appreciates all public responses and takes all concerns seriously in regards to building and maintaining multi-use, purpose built, single-track trails on the Malheur National Forest.

Learning more about the Wildlife Emphasis Area, within the Magone Lake project, GCC has asked for those trails to be moved out of that area and into the eastern part of the project. We are excited to see what has transpired when the new proposals come out soon.

It is our goal to create human-pow-

ered recreation on this incredible, beautiful forest, while taking all environmental factors and community thoughts into consideration.

Some of the proposed trails are on old closed roads, we do this whenever we can. It is important to understand we can not take an open road — whether it is minimally used or not — and turn it into a trail, as road-to-trail conversion makes the road impassable to all vehicles. We must use already closed/decommissioned roads. Although some closed roads have grades that are too steep and/or run along stream beds, that is not sustainable for trails or the environment in the long run. GCC looks for ways to build and maintain trails in the least impactful way.

GCC appreciates being able to have constructive discussions for the greater good and future of our community.

Andrea Mesple-Herburger
Grant County Chapter Rep.,
COTA
John Day

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