

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.

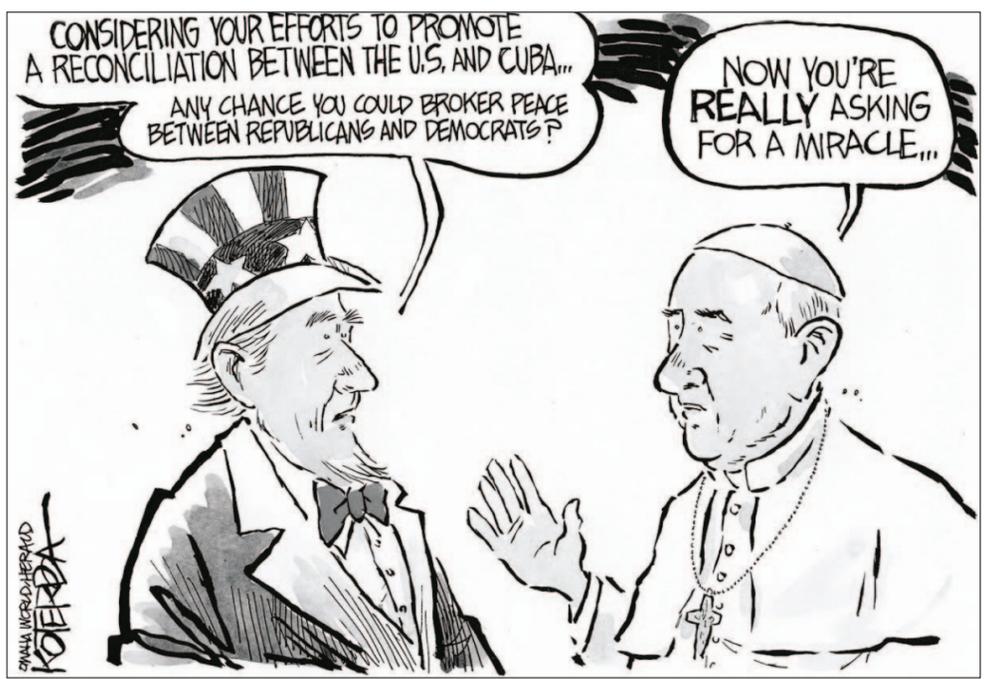
Aren't there some employers who take advantage and classify workers as "exempt" just to cheat them out of overtime? Yes, unfortunately, there are. But most employers are fair, and try to offer pay competitive in the local market commensurate with the duties performed.

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.



It's time to change the breast cancer conversation

By Laura Snyder
For EO Media Group

On the cusp of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I'm grateful for the opportunity to check in.

I'm still above ground, as they say, so that's a plus.

After a year of stability on my first line treatment for my HER2+ metastatic breast cancer (MBC), I abruptly changed treatments because those drugs were no longer effective at keeping my cancer at bay.

This is typical with metastatic patients. Our treatments work until the cancer figures out a way around them, and we have to move on. I have to say, I was hoping for more time on that first, relatively doable regimen.

This is life with mets, for all of the estimated 155,000 people in the U.S. living with this disease.

Enough about me though. As I have become a full-time cancer patient and lost my ability to work for a living, I thought I would try to be of use in this, my new normal, my new occupation.

I was privileged and grateful to attend Living Beyond Breast Cancer's Annual Metastatic Breast Cancer Conference this past April. Over 300 of us "metsters" dragged our broken bodies to Philadelphia to participate in breakout sessions and network and be with each other.

Alongside the conference I was fortunate to be accepted into LBBC's first Hear My Voice Advocacy Training, with about 25 other participants.

These included a 24-year-old professional ballerina; a 35-year-old civil rights attorney and mother of young children, who was forced to retire; a 34-year-old former AIDS social worker (also retired), among others, all living with MBC.

It was an amazing experience, culminating with a "die-in" on the floor of the Philadelphia Loews Hotel. 110 of us laid down to show the number of people dying from MBC every day in the United States. There was a eulogy, a somber silence and a sense of the surreal.



Laura Snyder

And this was where the new organization MET UP (www.metup.org) was born. MBC Exchange to Unleash Power is modeled after ACT UP, the AIDS activism group, and has mentored MET UP in the best of ways.

I'm not sure the organizers of this first training anticipated the scope of the die-in planned in Washington, D.C., for Oct. 13, the day in October dedicated to MBC. 1,430 people will lie down at the Capitol and "die" to symbolize the number of people worldwide that die of MBC every day. Meetings with legislators are scheduled the day of the die-in, to demand that more federal breast cancer research funding go to MBC. We have more than enough awareness. It's time to work for real change and a cure.

Many of us across the country not traveling to D.C. are organizing die-ins in our own communities.

I have partnered with Astoria High School to organize our own local die-in Oct. 13 as a senior project.

I am scheduling meetings with Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and Rep. Suzanne Bonamici's staffers to share with them the realities of MBC and the distinct lack of research funding going to this incurable disease.

Former Presidential candidate Scott Walker said the biggest threat to American lives is radical Islamic terrorism. Not true. Heart disease and cancer are actually the biggest threats to American lives. Federal dollars need to go to medical research.

Because of the "pinkwashing" of

breast cancer, especially in October, many people are not aware that breast cancer is not the "easy, curable cancer" it has been portrayed as by organizations like Susan G. Komen for the Cure and others.

Many are not aware that up to 30 percent of early stage breast cancer patients will have a metastatic recurrence, at which point the disease becomes incurable. Up to 30 percent.

Unfortunately these numbers are extrapolated from early stage diagnosis numbers and mortality statistics, as SEER (Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results) and most state cancer registries do not track metastatic recurrence at all.

As my friend Beth pointed out so succinctly in a blog post, "If all you want to do is to say 'Hey you, there is a thing and it is called breast cancer' then yes, awareness is the right tool." Why would we want only that? We don't need cute pictures of dogs in bras (For real. Check the Komen website.)

We need education and we need money for research for a cure.

I hope to change the paradigm of breast cancer awareness in our community to one of action and focus on the things that matter, like scientific research to find a cure and treatments less toxic to prolong life and enhance quality of life.

Let's maybe stop buying pink trinkets and registering for races. Money raised this way does NOT go to research to find a cure.

Susan Komen died of metastatic breast cancer, causing her sister to found Komen to raise more awareness of breast cancer. It was well intentioned and a wonderful cause at the time. However, it has become clear that the corporate partnering and marketing of stuff has taken the front burner at this and other breast cancer charities.

I'll say it one more time. We are all aware of breast cancer. It's time to change the conversation to curing it.

Laura Snyder lives in Astoria and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We have a great service in our area

To the Editor:

We live in one of the most beautiful and special counties in Oregon. We need to be grateful and appreciative of what we have in Grant County.

The People Mover is a great asset to our county and beyond. They go out of their way, within reason, to accommodate the traveler.

I had a lady friend who lived with me for a while. There were a few times she would fly from Redmond to Portland. The People Mover would pick her up at my home, take her to the airport and help her with her luggage. On her return trip, they again would pick her up and bring her back. That always

amazed me! Where else could you find such service?

Recently a dear friend from Portland was coming to visit me on a Tuesday.

Our People Mover goes to Pendleton and Washington on Tuesdays. The arrival of the Greyhound bus in Pendleton was scheduled to arrive at 4:30 p.m. and the People Mover was returning through Pendleton at 4:40 p.m. A perfectly timed connection to bring her to Mt. Vernon, and the People Mover was willing to pick her up from the Greyhound bus stop.

I received a phone call at 4:40 p.m. from my friend that the bus had left Portland an hour late and was still 35-40 minutes from Pendleton.

Knowing the People Mover has

a schedule to keep, I felt I needed to drive to Pendleton to get her. But I decided to call the People Mover office to tell them about the late arrival. The office contacted the driver and said he would go back and pick her up. He delivered her to my door and helped with her luggage, too.

Where else in Oregon or anywhere could you get this kind of service? All of our People Mover drivers are friendly, accommodating and willing to make your trip on their bus pleasant.

We are blessed to have such an accommodating transportation service as our People Mover. We also need to respect, protect and be so grateful we live right here at this time.

Bonnie Hester
Mt. Vernon

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.

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Pending Bills: For information on bills in Congress, Phone: 202-225-1772.

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