

GUEST COMMENT

BOLI overstepping authority on minimum wage rules

By Ted Ferrioli
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

One of the lesser known steps in government “sausage making” happens after the Legislature passes new laws, when state agencies responsible for working out the details step in to determine how to implement and enforce them. Right now, Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), our state agency in charge of employment laws, is grinding the sausage of the new three-tiered minimum wage set to go into effect on July 1.

Unfortunately, BOLI — led by elected Commissioner Brad Avakian — is pulling a bait-and-switch on Oregonians as they figure out exactly how to track and enforce three different minimum wages across the state. When the Legislature passed SB 1532, setting the minimum wage at \$14.75 for Portland, \$13.50 for suburbs and \$12.50 for rural communities, we made it clear that wages would be determined by the location of the employer, not the employee. We decided on “employer is located” because otherwise businesses would be required to track their employees hour by hour, costing small businesses even more money and possibly violating employee privacy.

I opposed setting three different minimum wages for Oregon workers, but I trusted that BOLI would carry out the Legislature’s very specific instructions to determine an employees’ hourly rate based on where their employer is based. The definition of “employer is located” is common sense: It’s the place

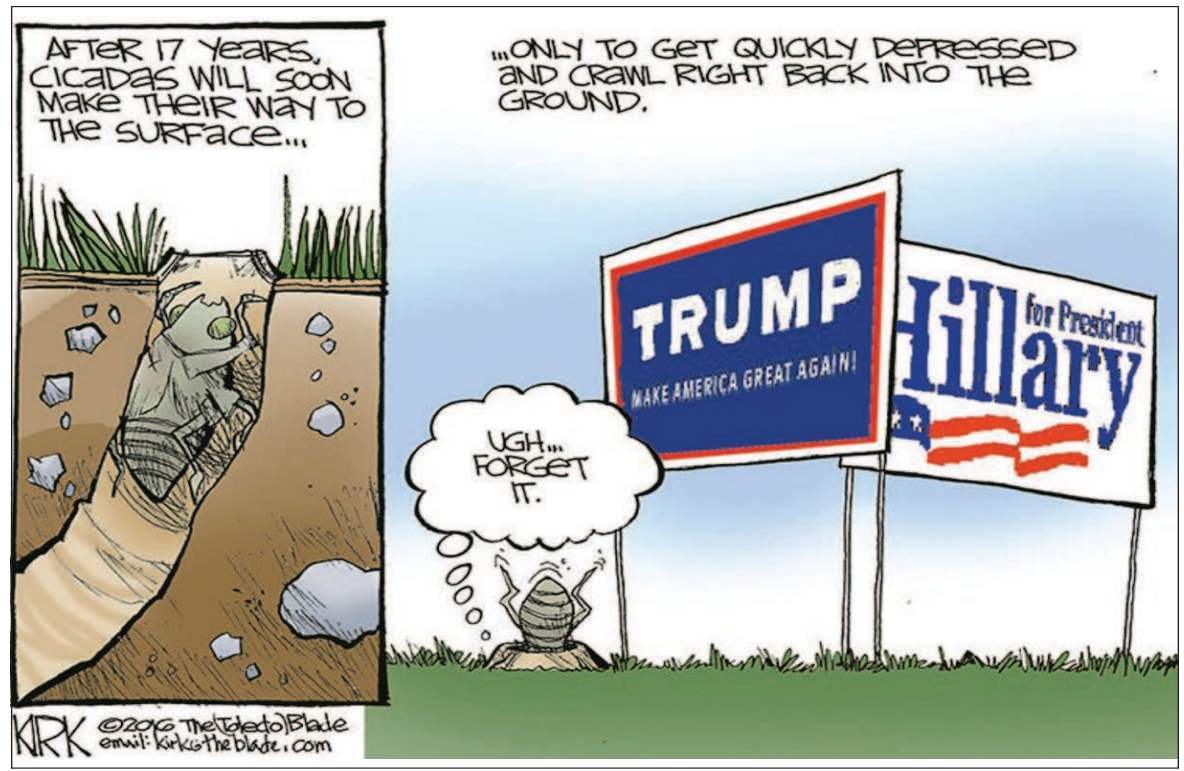
where an employee normally reports to work, not where they happen to do a day of landscaping or a half day on a road service call. Employers and employees alike need stability and predictability. Requiring GPS-like tracking of an employee’s location to determine how much they get paid is costly for small business owners and unpredictable for Oregon workers.

This is also consistent with supporters’ expressly stated policy goals of simplicity and predictability, both for employers and employees.

But BOLI doesn’t seem to care. Commissioner Avakian is going in a direction that was put off limits by sponsors and proponents of the bill, demonstrating he has no respect for the rule of law, only the “Rule of Avakian.”

This is just one more example of BOLI’s excessive and harmful reach into policymaking. BOLI’s proposed minimum wage rules must be fixed, and I have asked Commissioner Avakian to do so immediately. If this is another episode of BOLI overstepping its authority to pay back special interests and campaign donors, Oregon small businesses and workers will be the true casualty. It’s time our state government did everything possible to help small businesses and the thousands of Oregonians they employ succeed, starting with fixing BOLI’s new rules for the minimum wage. Oregonians should reject any politician that refuses to acknowledge the “checks and balances” of a Democracy.

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, John Day, is the Senate Republican leader.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Employees support Russ Young, Iron Triangle

To the Editor:

Some people in the community have been questioning the character and motives of Russ Young and Iron Triangle concerning his work on projects within the Malheur National Forest in Grant County. We work for or with Iron Triangle and know that Russ does what he says and provides jobs to us and many others within Eastern Oregon. Iron Triangle provides us with the ability to continue to live and work in Grant County now and into the future through the 10-year stewardship contract with the Malheur forest, providing for our families without having to work out of town for extended periods of time.

Russ not only looks out for our well-being but provides contributions to many projects and causes throughout Grant County, which help others who don’t work at Iron Triangle to benefit from his work.

Those who try and berate Russ and Iron Triangle don’t seem to understand the level of commitment Russ has shown to our community. In the years when things in the timber industry and our community were real tough, Russ kept us working and continued to provide assistance to local causes and activities. We appreciate the commitment to a healthy Grant County, a healthy forest and our local schools, which Russ Young has demonstrated over the past 25 years, and encourage our fellow citizens to support Russ as well.

Signed by 82 Iron Triangle employees and their families

Editor’s note: The full list of names is available on the online version of this letter at myeaglenews.com.

er. He has invested years of service and hard work into promoting Grant County’s economy and quality of life, as county commissioner, and previously served on both John Day and Canyon City councils as councilor and mayor. At county court meetings, we have been impressed with his willingness to listen to different viewpoints and to add to the discussion constructively. Commissioner Labhart takes the time to attend city council and school board meetings as well as visit senior centers throughout the county to hear from his constituents about their needs and concerns. His experience and background on local issues is tremendously helpful on the various local and state committees that he serves on as our representative, such as the Association of Oregon Counties Veterans steering committee, GC Local Community Advisory Council and the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care. We appreciate his involvement in the community and the knowledge and expertise with which he represents his constituency. Experience and dedication makes a positive difference for our county!

Mark and Adele Cerny
Bear Valley

‘What are you doing to make this a better community?’

To the Editor:

Since the occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occurred, the community began to become divided around many different issues (forest access, government overreach, the sheriff’s deputies’ natural resource plan, “stewardship,” the elections, the Canyon Creek Complex fire). This “us” vs. “them” mentality in this community came to a head last week for me with John D. George’s letter to the editor.

What kind of community do we want to have when all the smoke clears from all this division? Speaking only for myself, I want:

- a community that sticks together regardless of whether or not we disagree about policies or laws or even who we want for county commissioner or sheriff;
- a community that thrives economically, where our property values increase, as do our student numbers in schools; and
- decreased unemployment, more job creation in the private sector.

Unfortunately for some, that model includes the government, both state and federal. We can all agree there are things we would change if we made the rules, but guess what, we don’t. Our community is in a better position economically due to collaboration, the stewardship contract and increased forest restoration overall.

Is “coordination” good? Maybe, but one thing I know for sure is that we are making progress with “collaboration,” and for my family and I, we want to live in a community that picks each other up instead of tearing each other down, and that includes working with people that may not always agree.

Gordon Larson’s comments at the community meeting Jan. 26 keep ringing in my head about who is tearing us down and who is building us up. He was saying our community is made of both government workers and private workers, working together to better our county.

Whether government employee or

private employee, what are you doing to make this a better community? As for John D. George and the other folks that have been attacking people like my dad, King Williams, Russ Young, Dave Hannibal and Mark Webb, you should choose your character battles more carefully.

Zach Williams
Canyon City

Clinton has experience, knowledge and integrity

To the Editor:

It has been a wild and woolly political season the past year, and the time has finally arrived to pick our candidates for president. Democrats have the choice between a proven leader in Hillary Clinton and an idealist with big ideas in Bernie Sanders.

The two candidates aren’t all that far apart on the issues of health care, minimum wage, climate change, even job creation. But they are pretty far apart on who has the political skills to accomplish these goals. Hillary Clinton brings the experience, knowledge and integrity to accomplish what needs to be done to move our country forward in the next decade.

The ballots are out now, and as a longtime supporter of Hillary Clinton and a former delegate for her at the 2008 Democratic Convention, I urge you to vote to make Hillary Clinton our next president.

Jack Lorts
Former mayor
Fossil

Check facts before believing accusations

To the Editor:

In response to a letter (published in the April 27 Blue Mountain Eagle) by John D. George, who is a federal employee living in Montana:

He has made false statements about me and others whom I respect. My family and I are lifelong residents of Grant County who care for our county, our way of life and our forests.

John stated that:

1. I and others (Russ Young, Dave Hannibal and Mark Webb) “have a financial stake in seeing projects completed ... at the expense of decommissioning roads.”
2. “Mark, King, Russ and Dave ... represent their own personal interest ... at the expense of all of our open access to the forest.”

Both of these statements are false! Iron Triangle, Grayback and King Inc. directly employ many workers supporting many families not just their “personal interest” and have all challenged and objected to road closures and decommissioning of roads and limitations to access on the Malheur National Forest, never advocating to trade away access.

3. “... Mark makes his paycheck by ‘facilitating’ the ‘collaborative’ ... to help King, Russ and Dave get their work and money ...”

This too is false!

Mark is hired by the BMFP collaborative to facilitate the development of the projects that have:

- increased the annual harvest on the MNF to 75 MMBF/year with no litigation;
- increased jobs and school enrollment after a 15-year decline;
- kept the 100+ employees working at Malheur Lumber and the

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WHERE TO WRITE

GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net.
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
- **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
- **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.

SALEM

- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.
- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.
- **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D** — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: <http://wyden.senate.gov> Fax: 202-228-2717.
- **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D** — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Email: senator@merkley.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.
- **U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R** — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

Young people facing economic difficulty

To the Editor:

Oddly enough, a think tank funded by the Koch brothers offers an excellent description of why our economically discouraged young people are supporting Bernie Sanders’ presidential bid. Generation Opportunity reports that more people aged 18-29 are making less than \$25,000 annually than there were during the 1990s. One-fourth of these young people are still living with their parents, and only 36 percent of people under 35 own their own homes, the lowest level on record since home ownership figures were first tabulated by age.

The generation report asserts that young Americans are increasingly impoverished because the U.S. government over-regulates American entrepreneurs, but it seems more likely that strangling student loan debt, low entry level wages and American business’ increasing reliance on part-time, temporary labor are the real culprits. If American youths are to catch up economically with their parents, they need the higher minimum wage, job creation and publicly funded higher education which Bernie Sanders is fighting for.

Clinton Grubbs
Bangor, Maine

Experience and dedication

To the Editor:

We support Chris Labhart for re-election as county commission-



Grant County’s Weekly Newspaper

PUBLISHER..... MARISSA WILLIAMS, MARISSA@BMEAGLE.COM
 EDITOR..... SEAN HART, EDITOR@BMEAGLE.COM
 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT..... KRISTINA KREGER, KRISTINA@BMEAGLE.COM
 EDITORIAL ASSISTANT..... CHERYL HOEFLE, CHERYL@BMEAGLE.COM
 COMMUNITY NEWS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
 SPORTS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
 MARKETING REP..... KIM KELL, ADS@BMEAGLE.COM
 OFFICE MANAGER..... LINDSAY BULLOCK, OFFICE@BMEAGLE.COM

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(including online access)
 Grant County\$40
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 Outside Continental U.S.....\$60
 Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
 send address changes to:
 Blue Mountain Eagle
 195 N. Canyon Blvd.
 John Day, OR 97845-1187

USPS 226-340

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