

\$15 minimum wage would hit rural economy hard

Fulfilling a campaign promise, Joe Biden wants to boost the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Farmers, whose livelihoods and property are on the line, are right to be wary of the possibilities.

Proponents suggest that employers are able either to absorb increased labor costs, or increase prices to offset costs without negative impacts to employees.

It's political claptrap.

Advocates say boosting the minimum wage will give millions of Americans a much-needed raise — or, at least, the ones lucky enough to keep their jobs. Politicians and proponents somehow miss the fact that hard-pressed employers will scour their operations for ways to reduce their payrolls to offset the increase. In addition to layoffs, many will switch to part-time and on-call employees as ways to save money.

Mechanization and automation, which eliminate jobs, will also become more attractive.

This wage hike would hurt small businesses the most. Big chains can absorb the increase, safe in the knowledge that their smaller competitors won't be able to keep up.

Those smaller ag operations and processors in labor-intensive sectors will be forced to sell out to larger competitors.

And it's not only businesses that will feel the pinch. Local governments and school districts will also have to raise wages, or cut staff.

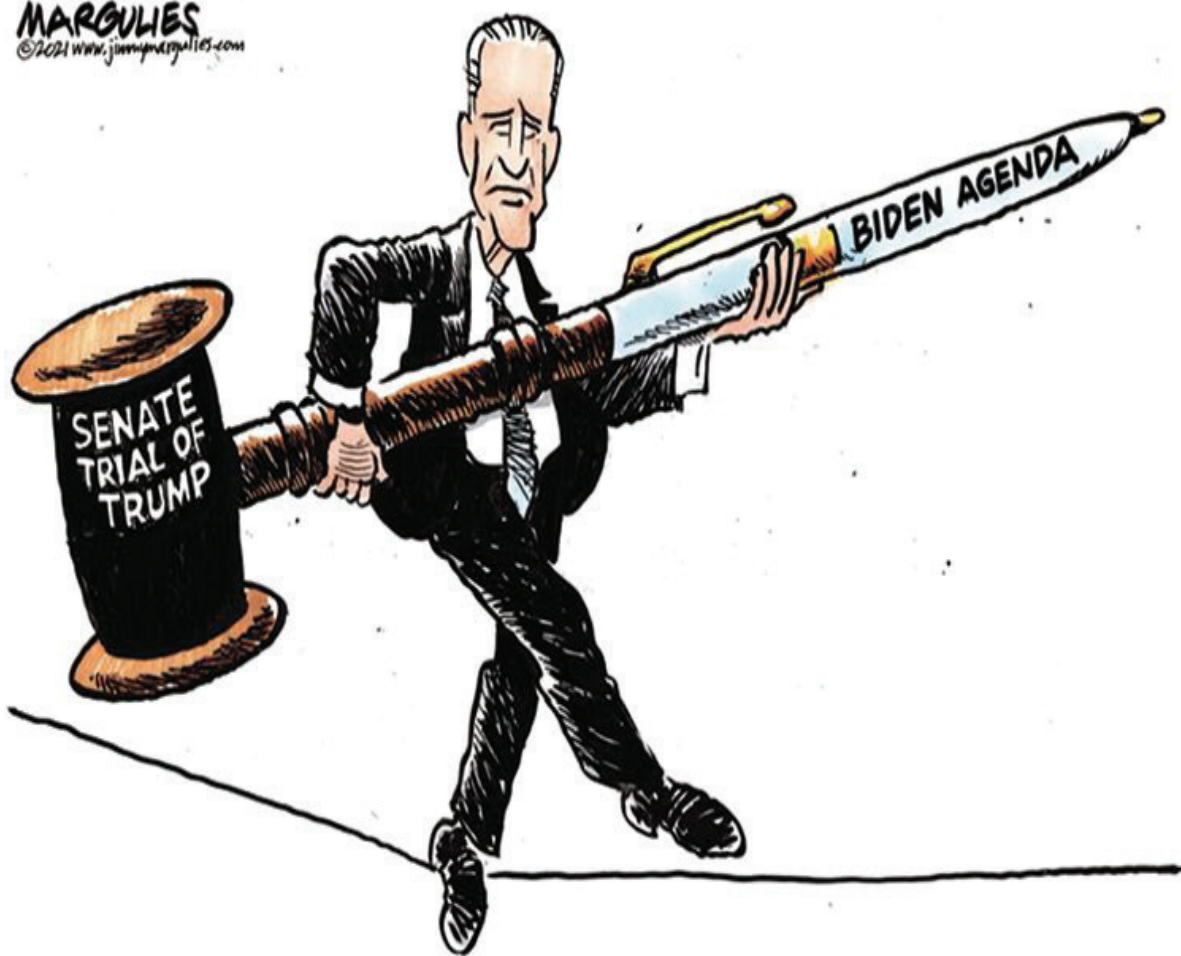
President Biden put his proposal to increase the minimum wage into his \$2 billion COVID relief package. He most likely believes reluctant lawmakers — even many moderate Democrats have balked at the \$15 figure — will have a tougher time saying “no” if it's wrapped in the flag of pandemic aid.

But Congress needs to be cautious. The result will be fewer jobs, fewer businesses and a weaker rural economy. Putting the thousands of businesses battered by government reaction to the virus on a better footing makes more sense than increasing their costs.

Those seeking higher minimum wages want to use other people's money to make political points with their supporters.

Proponents of higher minimum wages may be disappointed to find out that a robust economy, not governmental fiat, benefits workers most.

MARGULIES
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EDUCATION CORNER

Six helpful hints

With the development of vaccines for the coronavirus and distribution underway, there may be an end to distance learning just around the corner. This said, there are still many children struggling with their reading and parents assisting their children with schooling. Learning to read is not the same for everyone. Reading text is a human-created skill and not a natural skill for our brains to process. Therefore, depending on acquisition of a long spectrum of skills, some children have no problems learning to read while others struggle. To add to the confusion, English is a blend of several different languages and rules, making it even harder to understand.

There are those few people in our country who spend their time studying our language and all the rules that apply, yet most of us do not aspire to be linguists. Webster, back in the 1800s, brought us a complete rule book of most of the words and rules behind their spellings. There was a time when teachers were expected to know all those rules prior to starting to teach. Over the years we have relied on textbook publishers to provide those rules embedded in their curriculum. Many of us do not always pick up on the rules or remember them because the curriculum moves on quickly. When challenged why a word is spelled a certain way, we dismiss it and say something like, “The English lan-



Dr. Scott Smith

guage just has some odd spellings.” In most cases, there is a reason behind that spelling, whether it be from the root of the word or the language the word was adopted from.

Having kids read to adults is always beneficial — well, most of the time. What do we find ourselves saying to a child when they come to a word they do not recognize? The most popular response is, “Sound the word out.” The only problem is that the only English words that can easily be sounded out are one-syllable, short vowel words. In the English language, you have to be able to identify the vowel sounds in words, many of which contain multiple letters, and then you are able to blend the word and hopefully get the sounds close enough that you are able to recognize the word from your auditory vocabulary or lexicon.

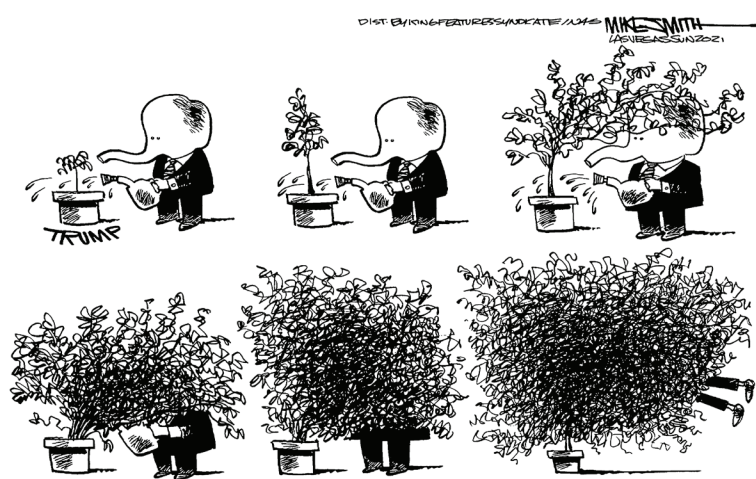
No worries! Here is some help. This will be enough to get you by without having to become a linguist. There are six basic syllable rules that most English words follow or at least follow closely enough that you can get an approximation and then recognize the word. The same six rules also help with spelling. Here they are: open syllable (go, me), closed syllable (cat, fin), vowel team, “r”-controlled (first, far, or), vowel/consonant/silent “e” (same,

case) and consonant “-le” (little, able). Common blends, digraphs and diphthongs can also cause confusion. Blends are connected letters where you can hear all the letter sounds. Digraphs are a cluster of consonants that create a new sound, and diphthongs are a cluster of letters with at least one vowel. These are the most commonly found word parts in elementary texts. The letter “y” is sometimes considered a vowel, but there is a reason. English words don't end in the letter “i” so they use “y” (my, sky, by).

A great activity for students to do is sort single syllable words into each of the above groups. This allows them to work with words along with looking for vowel sounds. This activity only focuses on vowel sounds. The objective is to identify the vowel sound in each word or syllable and then blend the sounds together to get an approximation close enough that they can recognize the word or are able to spell the word closely enough to be able to recognize it.

Happy word discovery!

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their parent-teacher liaison.



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- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
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- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

‘Bentz was not representing his constituents’

To the Editor:

Representative Bentz's first act in Congress to challenge the Electoral College vote repudiates Rep. Greg Walden's legacy. Rep. Bentz was not representing his constituents. He was supporting and perpetrating a lie.

America has many problems, especially now. Rep. Bentz needs to be one of the brave souls who actually wants to solve them.

Mark Murray
Prairie City

Stand beside her, not against her

To the Editor:

I came to this amazing country from England 50 years ago at the age of 18.

We drove from Seattle to Dayville. I was in awe of the vastness and splendor of it all.

What I really noticed was how kind and friendly Americans were. But what I really wanted to say is coming from post-war England, I have seen what one man's distorted way of thinking can do, not just to a country, but a nation.

I have seen the rows and rows

of white crosses in England and Normandy of young men who fought for freedom, not just for this country, for all countries. They did not get to come home and enjoy the freedoms they fought and died for.

Next time free-thinking Americans decide to do what you all did on Jan. 6, don't just get on one knee, get on both knees and thank God and the brave men and women who are standing beside her, not against her, still putting their lives on the line so we can live the lives we all live in this beautiful land we call the USA.

God bless America.

Pam Martin
Dayville

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