

February 15, 2016

Honorable Paul Holvey, Chairman
House Business and Labor Committee

Chairman Holvey and members of the Committee,

We would urge the legislature to not increase the minimum wage. We currently have one of the highest minimum wages in the country. It is \$2.00 higher than the national minimum wage. Minimum wage is not a "living wage", and should not be treated as such. We should not have to pay \$12 - \$15 per hour for first time employees such as high school students. Most do not have farm work experience or even driving experience, so we have to train them to do the job safely and proficiently. This takes a lot of time. If employees have experience, we pay a higher wage or a bonus at the end of the season, but that is our choice. We should not be forced to pay a higher wage for employees that don't have the experience.

As a small business we cannot keep sustaining higher wages, higher taxes, and more government oversight. It takes a lot of time to stay in compliance and this is taking away from our businesses. We cannot keep creating jobs and expanding our businesses if profits keep disappearing. During harvest we hire 6 seasonal employees, but increasing the minimum wage would force us to upgrade our equipment and mechanize more, thus decreasing the need for employees. Upgrading equipment is a cost, but we will see a return on investment quicker than if we have to continue to keep paying higher wages. If we upgrade, then we will only need to hire 3 people. Therefore 3 people that had jobs before will no longer have a job. We are not the only farm or small business considering these options. If we all choose to increase mechanization it will decrease the number of jobs available, increase unemployment, and increase the need for more government assistance (i.e. WIC, Oregon Trail Card, housing, and financial aid for higher education). For these reasons we urge you to not increase the minimum wage.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Elam
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