

Chair Holvey and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 1532.

Increasing the minimum wage is not a universal fix for the finances of employees entering the workforce and acquiring skills and experience.

Basic skills learned in entry level jobs like arriving for work as scheduled, following work instructions, working collaboratively with others and knowing when to ask for assistance and guidance are not dependent on the zip code of the employer. Those basic skills, once mastered, are the foundation for moving on to more responsible and complex tasks garnering a bigger paycheck.

The 3 zone approach to setting minimum wage creates and establishes unequal and inequitable conditions for employers and employees. The economy across all parts of Oregon needs to be reinvigorated by simplifying and reducing state meddling in business. That will provide the most fertile environment for growing the number of jobs and increased pay scales as employers compete for the employees best able to fill those positions.

A blunt observation is that the State of Oregon is not building a reputation as business welcoming state. Businesses will be forced to automate more, import more and increase prices to remain in operation. Depending on the nature of their competitor's product costs, some Oregon businesses will not survive and the newly unemployed will be looking to support their families in a smaller pool of available jobs. Oregon's agricultural environment would be altered in ways that are not readily ameliorated by legislative intervention and it would be too little too late for farm operations that can't wait for a next legislative session. Importing machine operators from other countries starts looking like a better decision than employing high school and college students during harvest operations.

The -A engrossed bill contains the emergency clause which has been abused as a means of eliminating and thwarting public input. Oregonians are growing tired of being intentionally blocked from using the ballot initiative process.

The Minority Report referring the minimum wage decision to the voters is an acceptable alternative to the -A version of the bill. While I believe the 3 zone approach to designating minimum wage is fundamentally flawed, the decision of the voters is the direction we should take.

My background is in Manufacturing and Quality Engineering of telecommunications equipment and implantable medical devices. I grew up and paid for college working in agriculture, food service and driving a truck; building a larger salary each step of the way.

From 1993-2002, after extensive efforts to train and develop an exceptional workforce to produce telecommunication equipment, the Corvallis plant was closed and transported to Shanghai. Every job was lost, engineers, technicians, customer service, sales, clerical, assembler, material handling, purchasing & procurement and ALL the jobs at our local suppliers.

There was no similar business in the area to benefit from the exceptional workforce. None of those jobs have come back. The business environment remains more attractive elsewhere.