

My name is Lee Barton. I reside in Nyssa, Oregon. While I am currently retired, I have worked at minimum wage jobs, operated my own custom hauling business, worked shifts during “campaign” (the sugar factory term for the time when sugar beets are processed into granulated sugar usually from October to February) and ultimately became a full time employee of The Amalgamated Sugar Co., LLC (TASCO) at the Nyssa plant.

In January, 2005 TASCO employees were called to a meeting and told that the plant would no longer process beets (sugar storage would continue as would the brown sugar processing). Just like that, after 28 years, I was out of a job. The following weeks are still a blur to me as I worried about how I would provide for my wife, who was a full-time homemaker. Fortunately for me, I was one 50 employees called back to work but at the Nampa, Idaho plant 35 miles away.

I know what it feels like to be laid off. I believe that an increase in Oregon’s minimum wage will ultimately result in more layoffs. While layoffs will occur across the state, our location on the Idaho/Oregon border will result in Oregon businesses relocating to Idaho. Employees will lose wages as the minimum wage in Idaho is much lower.

I urge you to leave the Oregon minimum wage as it is, particularly in Eastern Oregon. Our businesses, farmers, packing sheds, food processors, grocers, ranchers, restaurants, specialty shops, etc., will be unable to absorb the higher cost of minimum wages for their employees.