

I am writing to you concerning the proposed increase in Oregon's Minimum Wage. I am opposed to any increase in the current minimum wage. I do understand there is the likelihood of one or more ballot measures being on the November ballot proposing a \$15 per hour minimum wage. I also understand the high cost of living, particularly housing in the Portland area, is a factor driving this proposed increase.

While I am sympathetic to minimum wage workers struggling to live on a salary that was not intended to be a career, living wage, I can't help but wonder what is being done to remove some of the state barriers to creating jobs, and making it possible for workers to work more hours. Quoting from the Oregon Blue Book, "Although Oregon has a high minimum wage, workers in Oregon tend to work fewer hours per week and, as a result, average wage earnings are below the national level. Workers at Oregon businesses earned an average of \$759 in weekly earnings in 2013, which is below the national average earnings of \$825 per week." **So, why aren't we working to eliminate the roadblocks to more hours per worker?**

We need to create a business climate favorable to the expansion of existing businesses and location of new businesses to our state. In Malheur County we have seen businesses close and relocate to Idaho...Desert Seed and Ft. Boise Produce relocated across the river a several years ago. Agri-Service will close its Nyssa store (farm implement sales and service) and move into a new building in the Fruitland, ID area this year. We don't need more empty buildings and businesses leaving our community.

Also in our community are two Idaho-based businesses: our only grocery store (M&W Market) and Valley Wide CoOp Supply. I am concerned that these Idaho based businesses will close these stores leaving our citizens without their services. (Valley Wide has already closed the store in Durkee.) If M&W closes, the locally owned bakery and pharmacy located inside the store will probably disappear as well.

I cannot believe that anyone who has done the math on this proposal would clearly see that this increase will not help employees. How many small business owners across the state will cut employees to reduce the cost of doing business? I believe this increase will lead to higher unemployment. The increase in salaries will result in an increase of the cost of goods and services for everyone. My husband and I are retired. In January, recently received the news that our retirement income will be decreased \$40 per month due to increases in health insurance. So, our income has gone down but with an increase in minimum wage possible the cost of food (groceries and eating out), medicine, travel expenses (we are fortunate to travel in our retirement!)...everything will rise.

This proposal is **not** good for Oregon. It is not good for business owners, for employees and for citizens. I urge you to vote against this increase and work to defeat any ballot measure increasing Oregon's minimum wage.