

Minimum wage pro and con

Readers' letters 10:22 a.m. EST December 3, 2014



Raising wages works

I proudly serve the workers at Mesa Foods as president of their union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 227. I can honestly say that the majority of our members would be happy to see the minimum wage increase to \$10.10 per hour, especially those that would get a pay raise. Many of our members at Mesa Foods already enjoy wages over \$10.10.

I was surprised by Mesa CEO Ted Longacre's blatant attempt to mislead readers [in his recent op-ed](#), ([/story/opinion/contributors/2014/11/24/ted-longacre-keep-louisville-competitive/19476307/](#)) about what would happen to our union contract at Mesa Foods if a minimum wage increase passed — as if something bad would happen to the workers.

The truth is, when it comes to the union contract, the only thing that would change if Metro Council voted to give workers a raise, is that wages would increase to comply with the law. That's it.

Raising wages for workers means they will have more money to spend at local businesses, which will help stimulate our economy. As demand grows for local products and services, more people will be needed to help business meet this demand. Not to mention, lifting people out of poverty is what a compassionate city should do.

We have the opportunity as a city to join 11 other cities that raised wages for workers in 2014. Papers like the Seattle Times report, "For all the political uproar it caused, SeaTac's closely watched experiment with a \$15 minimum wage has not created a large chain reaction of lost jobs and higher prices ..." (June 13, 2014).

Opponents of raising the wage will continue to use their "the sky is falling" tactics to try to create doubt, but on Election Day of this year voters across America were clear: They support increasing the minimum wage. Everyday people get it. Raising wages works.

MARV RUSSOW

President

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 227

Louisville 40219

Unintended consequences

I care about the unintended consequences that a "go it alone" increase of the minimum wage will create for our job creators. Louisville is already the third most heavily taxed city of our peer cities. Policies passed here are not implemented in a bubble and there will be negative consequences for even good intentioned ideas. We have a business-friendly state to our north and surrounding counties that continue to lure jobs away from Louisville. Raising the minimum wage should be discussed at the federal level, balanced with economically friendly pro-growth strategies, but going it alone in Louisville will only put us further at risk to lose more to our neighbors.

Council members have heard from Greater Louisville Inc., business owners, volunteer fire districts, and well respected economists that employers will be forced to raise prices, reduce hours, cut staff, freeze hiring, halt expansion, consider opportunities outside of Louisville, or worst-case scenario close their doors to make up for increased labor costs. The proposed wage increase also presents a cumulative increase on labor costs, as the employer's portion of the 6.2 percent Social Security tax, the 1.45 percent Medicare tax, increased worker's comp and liability insurance, as well as the ACA employer mandate that comes due in 2016. Furthermore, some businesses may be forced to relocate because their reimbursements are fixed, or they compete on a national level for business.

Metro Council has heard from a west Louisville packaging company that competes only on a national level that fears they will either close their doors, or move the business to a neighboring community. A local wage increase may seem like a nice thing for government to mandate, but would have a devastating effect on the person whose wages go to zero when they lose their job.

Dr. Aaron Yelowitz's study titled "How did the \$8.50 Citywide Minimum Wage Affect the Santa Fe Labor Market?" found the minimum wage increase led to an 8.3 percent increase in unemployment for low-skilled workers. The Santa Fe minimum wage increase only applied to companies of 25 employees or more. The Louisville minimum wage ordinance does not contain this exemption, and would translate into an even bigger percentage of job losses in Louisville since it applies to small locally owned business with any number of workers as well.

Proponents and opponents of a minimum wage increase agree that minimum wage alone does not lift people out of poverty, nor will an increase keep workers off of federal aid programs. What will assist is an approach that includes education, training, strengthening the resources of families and allowing entrepreneurship and a vibrant economy to flourish. For Louisville's workers and employers big and small to thrive, we should focus on educating our workforce, reducing and simplifying our tax code, and decreasing regulations, to create opportunity for all.

MARILYN PARKER

Metro Council Member

District 18

Louisville 40202

Read or Share this story: <http://cjky.it/1CFd5EO>

MORE STORIES



Fred Cowan: A profile in service

[\(/story/opinion/columnists/2014/12/02/fred-cowan-profile-service/19773893/\)](/story/opinion/columnists/2014/12/02/fred-cowan-profile-service/19773893/)

[\(/story/opinion/columnists/2014/12/02/fred-cowan-profile-service/19773893/\)](/story/opinion/columnists/2014/12/02/fred-cowan-profile-service/19773893/)

Dec. 2, 2014, 4:27 p.m.



Editorial | Police body cameras

[\(/story/opinion/editorials/2014/12/02/editorial-police-body-cameras/19794753/\)](/story/opinion/editorials/2014/12/02/editorial-police-body-cameras/19794753/)

[\(/story/opinion/editorials/2014/12/02/editorial-police-body-cameras/19794753/\)](/story/opinion/editorials/2014/12/02/editorial-police-body-cameras/19794753/)

Dec. 2, 2014, 4:24 p.m.



Letter | Education standards

[\(/story/opinion/readers/2014/12/02/letter-education-standards/19778271/\)](http://story/opinion/readers/2014/12/02/letter-education-standards/19778271/)

[\(/story/opinion/readers/2014/12/02/letter-education-standards/19778271/\)](http://story/opinion/readers/2014/12/02/letter-education-standards/19778271/)

Dec. 2, 2014, 11:19 a.m.



2/3 of California Students
Get Scholarships

Apply Today ►►