

THE TRIBAL TRIBUNE

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cartoon // Zach Green

Minimum wage hike a necessity

Outside of fast-food restaurants, picket signs bob in the air, blazoned with the words, "Fight for 15," as seen on the crosstown streets of Downtown Charleston on Nov. 29.

It's a sign of the times, as some workers are demanding that the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 be raised. The last time the minimum wage went up was in 2009, when it was gradually raised to its current rate from \$5.15 an hour.

Some states -- like New York and Oregon -- have already voted to raise their minimum wages gradually over a series of years. Nationally, President Barack Obama has proposed a \$10.10 minimum wage with his Raise the Wage campaign.

But what would a raise in the minimum wage do for Americans? That's the central argument: would it be helpful to those who are struggling, or would it hurt the economy and cause people to lose their jobs?

The national "living wage," as defined by a program designed by an Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the cost of living for a person a specific area, including typical expenses. In Charleston County, the "living wage" for one

person is \$11.69 -- more than the federally required minimum wage at the present time.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, one in 20 workers in South Carolina makes minimum wage or less. That puts S.C. as the sixth highest in the nation of states with people making minimum wage or less. A person supporting just himself lives at the poverty threshold if he makes \$12,082 a year; a four-person household needs to bring in \$24,036 a year to be at the poverty line.

So the minimum wage clearly needs to be raised to allow hard-working people to be able to live. But how do we do this?

One of the concerns is that with the rise of wages will come a loss of jobs as businesses have to make up for bigger payrolls. Former Congressional Budget Office Director Lawrence Mone predicts that with an increase of the minimum wage to \$15, approximately 6.6 million jobs will be lost. Even in states that have already approved a rise in minimum wage, experts warn of possible setbacks in the

economy, according to the New York Post.

Despite the possible drawbacks, the Tribal Tribune editorial staff believes South Carolina should put into place an incremental raise similar to New York or Oregon. New York's minimum wage will reach \$15 by the end of 2018, while Oregon has chosen to enact a slower rate, leading to a \$13.50 minimum wage by 2022. With planning, South Carolina should be able to enact a similar one in order to benefit those who need help the most.

Minimum wage needs to increase; without it, the living wage will continue to skyrocket while millions of working Americans must find a way to get more than the federal minimum.

It should be raised to help people get more money into the economy. It should be raised to get more people to live at the standard of living rather than below it -- for both humanitarian as well as economic reasons.

It should be raised for the businesses of America and the economic prosperity it has the potential of creating. It should just be raised.

Editorial



photo // Chloe Mehl

In memory of Gracie Rebecca Benjamin
 April 16, 1999 - Dec. 2, 2016