

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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**OPINION**

## Minimum Wage Presents Dilemma

This nation faces a curious dilemma in regards to raising the minimum wage. The situation drew into focus last week when a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report suggested that raising the current minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$10.10 per hour would raise the wage of about 16.5 million workers, could bring 900,000 people out of poverty and raise overall national income by \$2 billion — but it could come possibly at a cost of 500,000 jobs. (Actually, the CBO said the range of the job loss could be from 0 to 1 million jobs, so it really depends on how optimistic or pessimistic you care to view the situation.)

This report has given new ammunition to the foes of raising the minimum wage, which has not been adjusted in five years. An organization called the Employment Policies Institute, which is supported by the restaurant industry and a number of other business groups, has created a television commercial to assail the White House's proposed minimum-wage hike as a jobs killer — an all-too-familiar label tossed around these days.

On the other hand, a report issued last year by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) found that raising the minimum wage would directly or indirectly impact 27.8 million workers, grow the Gross Domestic Product by about \$22 billion and create roughly 85,000 new jobs. Another study last year by the Center for Economic and Policy Research reached similar conclusions.

So, we seem locked in a battle between economic interests: If we raise the minimum wage, it could cost jobs, according to the CBO; if we don't raise the wage, we are ensuring a stagnant baseline pay level for millions of people — and keeping almost a million people in poverty — in order to protect the bottom line.

This looms as a sticky issue of morality versus economics.

As a political matter, the minimum wage has a lot of traction. Many opinion polls show Americans in favor of increasing the wage. Part of its momentum is due in part to the fact that the wage has actually lost its real purchasing power through the years. According to the EPI, the minimum wage in 1968 was approximately worth \$9.40 in today's dollars. If its growth had kept pace with the growth in the average overall wage of American workers, the minimum wage now would be about \$10.65. Thus, the minimum wage has become stagnant while productivity and profits have grown. Not coincidentally, the EPI study cites the low minimum wage as one of the myriad contributors to the growing state of economic inequality in the country.

In that context, opponents of raising the minimum wage face a hard time selling the concept that keeping the minimum wage low is good for business and the economy. It might beg the questions: Who's business? And who's economy?

There could be an opening here for an admittedly unsatisfactory but more acceptable (to some) compromise. For instance, South Dakotians will be going to the polls this fall to vote on raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.25. That is still a painfully modest rate in the scheme of things, but it would seem to be a step in the right direction and, hopefully, momentum going forward.

However, if we as a nation dismiss the idea of raising the minimum wage because it may cost us jobs — if we are content with cultivating sub-poverty wages as a crucial component of our economic productivity — then it could be said that our economy may have more problems than we realize.

kmh

**THE VIEWS PAGE**

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

**ON THIS DATE**

**By The Associated Press**

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 25, the 56th day of 2014. There are 309 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Feb. 25, 1964, Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) became the world heavyweight boxing champion as he defeated Sonny Liston in Miami Beach. (The victory was scored as a technical knockout when an injured Liston failed to answer the bell for the seventh round.)

**On this date:** In 1836, inventor Samuel Colt patented his revolver.

In 1901, United States Steel Corp. was incorporated by J.P. Morgan.

In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving Congress the power to levy and collect income taxes, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox.

In 1914, Sir John Tenniel, the illustrator of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass," died in London three days before his 94th birthday.

In 1922, French serial killer Henri Landru, convicted of murdering 10 women and the son of one of them, was executed in Versailles.

In 1943, Allied troops reoccupied the Kasserine Pass after clashing with German troops during World War II.

In 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser became Egypt's prime minister after the country's president, Mohammed Naguib, was effectively ousted in a coup.

In 1964, Eastern Airlines Flight 304, a DC-8, crashed shortly after taking off from New Orleans International Airport, killing all 58 people on board.

In 1973, the Stephen Sondheim musical "A Little Night Music" opened at Broadway's Shubert Theater.

In 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos fled the Philippines after 20 years of rule in the wake of a tainted election; Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency.

In 1991, during the Persian Gulf War, 28 Americans were killed when an Iraqi Scud missile hit a U.S. barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

In 1994, American-born Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire with an automatic rifle inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank, killing 29 Muslims before he was beaten to death by worshippers. At the Winter Olympics in Norway, Oksana Baiul of Ukraine won the gold medal in ladies' figure skating while Nancy Kerrigan won the silver and Chen Lu of China the bronze; Tonya Harding

came in eighth.

**Ten years ago:** The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Locke v. Davey*, ruled states didn't have to underwrite the religious training of students planning careers in the ministry. The Mel Gibson film "The Passion of the Christ" opened in the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand on Ash Wednesday.

**Five years ago:** President Barack Obama introduced former Washington Gov. Gary Locke as his nominee for commerce secretary after two earlier choices dropped out. A Turkish Airlines Boeing 737 crashed while trying to land at Amsterdam's main airport, but 126 of the people on board survived; nine were killed, including the pilots.

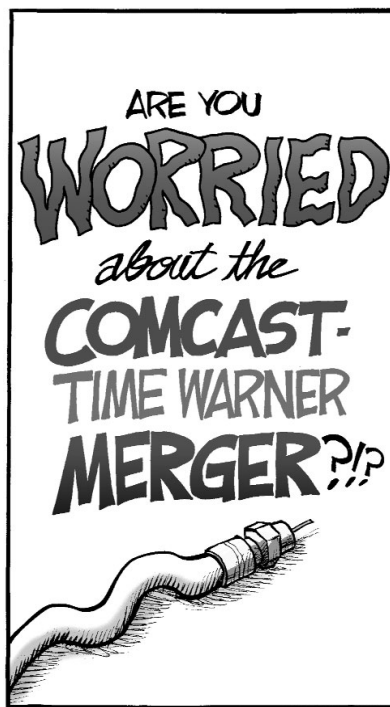
**One year ago:** A high-stakes civil trial started in New Orleans to assign blame and help figure out exactly how much more BP and other companies should pay for the 2010 Gulf oil spill. (Testimony for the first phase of the trial concluded in April 2013; the trial's second phase began and ended in Oct. 2013, with a third phase yet to take place.) Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, 96, died in Hanover, N.H.

**Today's Birthdays:** Country singer Ralph Stanley is 87. Actor Tom Courtenay is 77. CBS newsman Bob Schieffer is 77. Actress Diane Baker is 76. Actress Karen Grassle is 72. Humorist Jack Handey is 65. Movie director Neil Jordan is 64. Rock musician Dennis Diken (The Smithereens) is 57. Rock singer-musician Mike Peters (The Alarm; Big Country) is 55. Actress Veronica Webb is 49. Actor Alexis Denisof is 48. Actress Tea Leoni is 48. Comedian Carrot Top is 47. Actress Lesley Boone is 46. Actor Sean Astin is 43. Singer Daniel Powter is 43. Latin singer Julio Iglesias Jr. is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer Justin Jeffre is 41. Rock musician Richard Liles is 41. Actor Anson Mount is 41. Comedian-actress Chelsea Handler is 39. Actress Rashida Jones is 38. Country singer Shawna Thompson (Thompson Square) is 36. Actor Justin Berfield is 28. Actors Oliver and James Phelps ("Harry Potter" movies) are 28. Rock musician Erik Haeger (Carolina Liar) is 27.

**Thought for Today:** "Open-mindedness is not the same as empty-mindedness. To hang out a sign saying, 'Come right in; there is no one at home' is not the equivalent of hospitality." — John Dewey, American philosopher and educator (1859-1952).

**FROM THE BIBLE**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 NLT. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



**Pierre Report | Tom Jones**

## New Funding Formula For Schools Rejected

**BY SEN. TOM JONES**

D-District 17 (Viborg)

Tuesday morning I presented SB156 which will change the state funding formula for K-12. Simply put, my bill eliminates the portion of the law which states "the rate of inflation or whichever is less."

The bill puts K-12 state funding at a solid rate of 3 percent. The reason for the bill was to give school administrators and school boards a constant, rather than a fluctuating, amount they have to work with to prepare a budget for their school district.

I appreciated the support from six lobbyists and a Rapid City school board member. The only opponent was a representative from the Governor's Office. The Senate Education Committee chairwoman referred the bill because of its importance until Thursday, as two of the seven committee members were absent due to other bill commitments.

It has been my hope that this committee would pass this bill so the entire Senate members can make their decision on assisting education. Thursday morning, the Senate Education Committee sent SB156 to the 41st day, which means the bill is dead, by a vote of 5-2.

Also, Tuesday, we heard from the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT), Bureau of Administration and Bureau of Human Services.

The BIT requested an additional 32 Full-Time Employees (FTE) and the governor's suggested budget for FY 2015 only contained 20 new FTEs. BIT's total funding request is for \$33 million, of which \$9 million is from General Funds.

The Bureau of Administration's funding comes mainly from funds from all the other departments in state government. Their total request is for approximately \$41 million. Our fleet of state vehicles are bought, maintained, and used through this bureau. Also, the maintenance and repair for all state buildings comes from this department. This will be the 2nd year of the Governor's plan to get this section up to and maintaining it to 2 percent of replacement value. The maintenance and repair portion does not include any of the buildings under the Board of Regents.

The demolition work at the Human Services Center in Yankton is ahead of schedule and, as I understand it, it is under budget. If you recall, last year the Legislature appropriated \$6 million for this project. What is happening at the center only reassures us of the necessity of creating a maintenance and repair budget each year.

During the Senate session on Tuesday, we anticipated a great debate on two of the bills. The first was to help fund Teach For America out of General Funds for \$500,000. After debating SB127, the bill failed 17-17. Because of the money included in the bill, it had to pass with a two-thirds majority. I did vote for the bill. Most of us anticipated a huge debate on SB169, which would have provided access to and use of public waters on private property and to protect the rights of private property owners. To our surprise, the prime sponsor asked to table the bill. Therefore, it died a quiet death.

Wednesday morning we listened to information from the Public Utilities Commission. Their commission has 34 full-time employees and has a budget request of \$4.5 million.

Next, we listened to the Department of Pub-



Jones

lic Safety. Their department has 418 employees (277 of them are state troopers) and a recommended budget request of \$61 million. The new license plates scheduled for 2016 release are funded in this department. It was suggested that we look into one license plate per vehicle instead of two, which obviously would cut our production costs almost in half. Currently 31 states use two license plates and 19 use one plate. There are 451 employees in the Department of Labor and Regulation. Their budget request is for \$47 million of which \$1 million is General Funds. At the end of 2013, there were 10,800 jobs available and 15,000 unemployed workers in South Dakota.

Corrections Healthcare met with us again concerning health care costs. It costs around \$1.5 million each month, or \$18 million a year for health care for the inmates located in Sioux Falls, Pierre, Springfield and Custer.

In Senate Session Wednesday, SB162 passed 18-16 with a motion to re-consider. This bill would reform taxes at the Gold Core Mine in the Black Hills. I voted no on this bill. Also, SB90 passed in the Senate 29-5. It made certain provisions with the South Dakota High School Activities Association. I voted for this bill.

After session on Wednesday, the Senate Appropriations Committee convened for 10 bill considerations. Included in these bills were two bills I proposed. They both passed with amendments, 9-0. SB185 was for \$50,000 to assist the W. H. Over Museum with flooring expenses and education. The second bill, SB185, was for \$75,000 to assist the South Dakota Hall of Fame in Chamberlain with a new ceiling and for Internet education for fourth graders to teach them about some of our greatest South Dakotians. Both bills were amended from General Fund to "Other Funds" and then passed 9-0. These two bills will now be heard before the full Senate.

Thursday morning, the Senate Appropriations Committee met with the Department of School and Public Lands, Office of the State Auditor, Office of the Governor, Legislative Branch and, once again, the Department of Social Services.

Senate Bill 162, which repealed certain mineral severance taxes on precious metals, originally passed 18-16. I voted against this bill. It was asked on the Senate floor to be re-considered. I voted to re-consider and that motion passed 19-15. Upon a new vote, the bill failed 15-19. I, again, voted against and the bill died.

Friday, the Senate Appropriations Committee had 11 bill hearings. I won't go through all 11 bills, but here are a couple. SB114 establishes a wine direct shipper license and allow for direct shipments. The bill passed 5-3 and I voted against. SB137 made an appropriation to rehabilitate certain state-owned rail lines. The rail line is from Presho to Chamberlain and passed by amending the funding source from the Property Tax Reduction Fund. It passed the committee 9-0.

Tuesday, Feb. 25, is Cross-Over Day. All bills that originate in the Senate must be acted on and those bills that pass are sent to the House of Representatives and vice-versa.

With only three weeks left in the 2014 Session, I encourage your opinions and questions. Feel free to contact me at: sen.jones@state.sd.us.

**YOUR LETTERS**

**Why The Delay?**

**Randy Gleich, Yankton**

I don't have to be a Republican or a Democrat to know that affordable health care is an important issue. According to 2014 Henry Kaiser Family Foundation, approximately 110,000 uninsured South Dakotians would benefit if the state would join the exchange.

So to our politicians: What is the holdup? This is more than 10 percent of our population. I read a lot of fluff on various bills in Pierre but very little about this pressing statewide issue. I think with such an impact on our citizens, that this topic should be the main focus of the 2014 session.

As a reminder, the Declaration of Independence does state: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government be-

**Online Opinion**

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

**LATEST RESULTS:**

**Do you now think President Obama will approve the Keystone pipeline?**  
No . . . . . 49%  
Yes . . . . . 35%  
Not sure . . . . . 16%  
**TOTAL VOTES CAST . . . . . 288**

*The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.*

**CURRENT QUESTION:**

**Which movie do you think will win the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture?**

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

comes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government."