

### Minimum wage hike will hurt businesses

#### The Colby perspective

Kevin Bottrell



The federally-mandated minimum wage hike has taken effect.

The new law raises the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour. For an employee working 40 hours per week, this translates to making \$15,080 a year, which is edging toward the poverty line. The Census Bureau sets the poverty threshold each year, taking into account inflation, wages, housing prices, etc. The threshold also varies by family size. For a one-person household, the threshold is about \$10,500 per year. Minimum wage would be well over that if the person was working 40 hours per week, which many people earning minimum wage do not. Many are forced to take second or even third jobs just to get by.

For a family of four the threshold is about \$21,300. The family would have to have at least two minimum wage earners to get over that. And these formulas do not take into account regional differences in housing and food or seasonal differences in things like gas prices. A family skating by in September may be hard pressed to pay the heating bill in January or to put gas in their car in July.

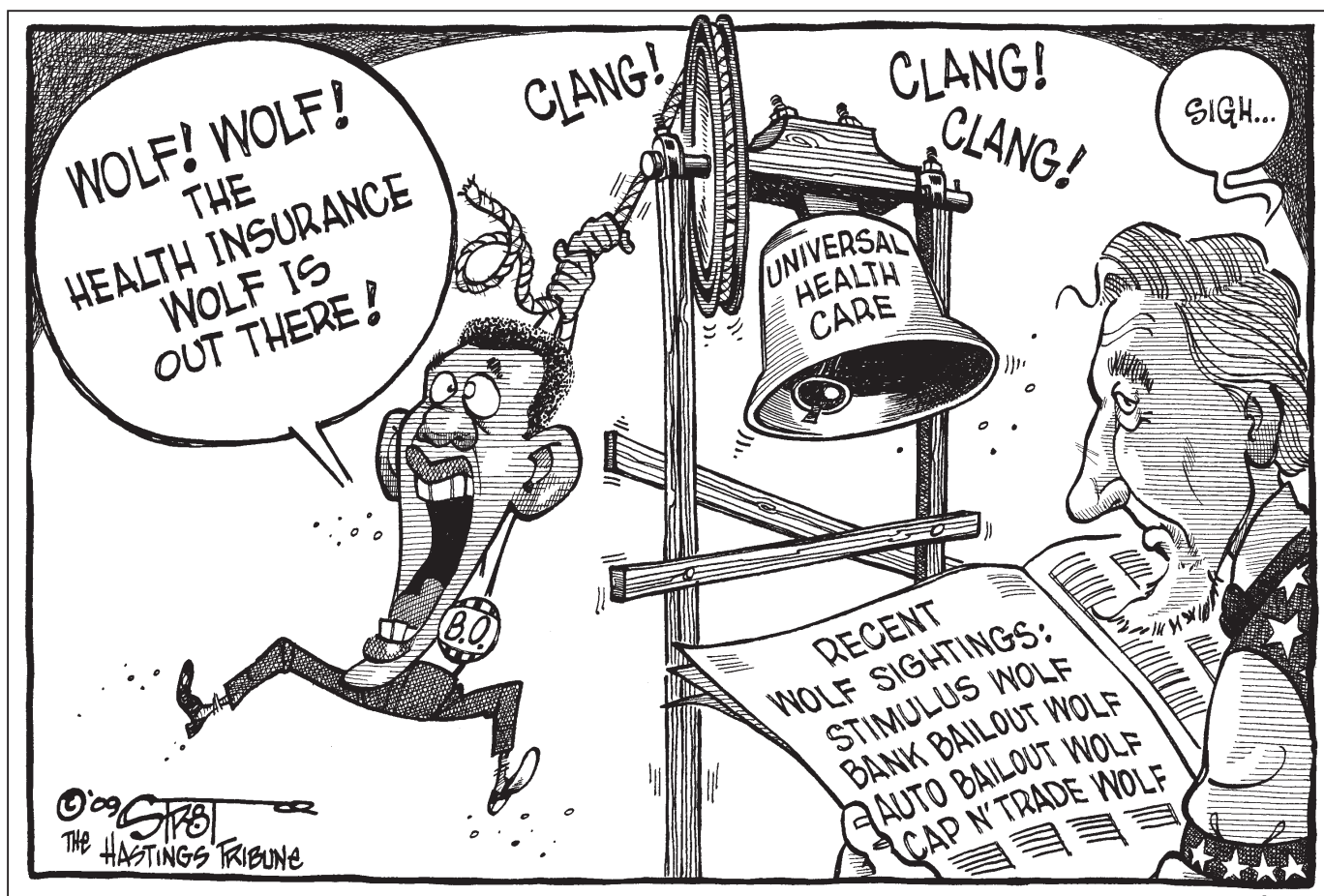
However, a federally mandated or state mandated minimum wage is a good thing. In simple terms, it eliminates slave labor. It ensures that people are not working for table scraps just to have enough. It isn't the best situation, but it is preferable to the more unscrupulous companies being able to pay whatever they want. There needs to be a base, and things go up from there, but you can't necessarily rely on the market to set it in a way that benefits everyone.

But simply increasing it during a recession creates an undue hardship on employers during a time that is at least as hard on them as it is on workers. Creating an added burden on employers is not the way to get out of a recession. It will force some — though probably not all — to either lay off workers or cut hours or both.

A better solution might be a comparable tax cut for both those making minimum wage and for the employers who pay it. An income tax cut would allow employees who are making minimum wage, which is not a living wage, keep more of their original paycheck. This increases their take-home pay just as much as increasing the wage would. The bottom line would still be the same.

A tax cut would also help small businesses. Their overhead would decrease allowing for more money available. While every business might not raise wages or increase hours, they wouldn't have to cut them.

Tax cuts are not the answer to everything, nor is raising minimum wage, but in a recession you don't want to put an even bigger strain on business. You want to regulate, but not strangulate, because where do the costs get passed onto? The worker or the customer.



### Moon landing and other space memories

#### Back Home

Nancy Hagman



JULY 2009: 40 years since man first walked on the moon. Walter Cronkite dies. A lot of people remember watching Walter Cronkite's reporting when the first man walked on the moon. We only got NBC so if I remembered it; Huntley-Brinkley would have been reporting. I don't remember.

I have random memories about the space program. I had just graduated from high school in 1969 so I was old enough to take interest in the world around me. But somehow I thought the first man walked on the moon on Christmas Eve. Maybe that was some other Apollo Mission.

I remember worrying about the chimps they sent before they risked sending a man.

I remember the very first manned space flights. One of them was on muddy day when the school bus got stuck. The driver walked to our house. Before Dad would pull him out the bus driver came in and we all watched the launch. If it had been dry I would have missed that.

I don't remember the near catastrophe of Apollo 13. But I've seen the movie. GREAT MOVIE. Every time I see it I sit on the edge of my seat when they are waiting to resume radio contact.

Kate was in first grade when the Challenger exploded. She had been excited because a teacher was on board. Teachers are heroes to first graders. (For the record, teachers are still my heroes.) I worried all day about her reaction, but it didn't seem to really register. She was busy selling Girl Scout cookies; at six merit badges are as important as heroes and more comprehensible than death.

The hoopla surrounding the 40th anniversary of the first man on the moon

has brought about some lobbying for renewing the space program. Daughter Elizabeth is helping us this summer so we get treated to her opinion. She is opposed to the idea. She thinks it will cost too much.

Whenever something come on the news about the space program this past week she would start yelling at the TV. I finally had to tell her I thought she should look at the big picture. "Look at all the wonderful things that we have today because of the space program," I said. "For instance, Tang!"

She laughed and added, "Freeze dried food!"

Those may not be the greatest examples but she looked around the kitchen and said, "Microwaves!"

We thought of more: PC's, the internet, MRI's. One reporter said his cell phone had more computer capability than the Apollo space crafts. The genius of those NASA engineers! Another great movie relating to space is "October Sky." Check that one out and see if you don't admire Yankee Ingenuity and marvel at the complexity of the human experience.

I'm getting a new knee soon. Would the technology that goes into replacement joints have occurred without the innovation of the Space Program?

What about wireless communication

and remote controls? Elizabeth says these things have made us lazy. Or course, she had to point this out during another conversation when I was imploring the hubby to please get a new garage door opener. I bet she will sing a different tune when she has to get new knees!

One thing I read pointed out Americans as they settled this continent in the 19th century and explored space in the 20th may have made mistakes but were always bold, searching to expand the frontier and by happy accident our realm of knowledge. By withdrawing from exploring the universe we are retreating to narcissism. The only thing we are interested in is ourselves.

This is a fairly harsh take those who think we should pull the plug on space program and solve our problems on planet earth. If we had used the money for the bailout for science or were to give the money it will take to finance health care to NASA would, in the long run, the jobs created and the technological advances be of greater economic benefit?

In the movie "Pretty Woman" Richard Gere, realizing the direction his business is headed is perhaps a bit misguided, complains; "We don't make anything." His attorney replies, "We make money."

We live in uncertain times. I for one am so thankful to live in Kansas. We still make things, do things, grow things. We don't make a lot of money or power or time for belly button gazing.

I'm for the space program and admire those connected with it. I have no explanation for the parts I inexplicably forgot. We could just shrug off the space program and say, "We can't afford it."

My question: "Can we afford not to?"

### The best medicine

Gladys had moved to a retirement community and walked to a church in her new neighborhood. She was in awe of the building and the beautiful music, but found the sermon boring.

Looking around she noticed several parishioners nodding off.

When the reverend finished, he

encouraged congregation members to greet each other. Gladys turned to the man on the left, who was yawning and smiling.

"I'm Gladys Dunn," she said, offering her hand.

"You and me both," the man replied.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS:

★ **Governor Kathleen Sebelius**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

## THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654 Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

**Nor'West Newspapers**  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002  
Incorporating the Norton County Champion  
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor

**Office hours:**  
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732  
E-mail:  
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

#### STAFF

Tom Dreiling..... editor and publisher  
Dana Paxton..... advertising director  
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jays sports  
Erica Bradley..... news editor  
Sherry Hickman..... bookkeeping/circulation  
Vicki Henderson..... computer production



### Stimulus money to boost broadband

#### Insight

John Schlageck

In rural Kansas, it's difficult to keep up. This is especially true of high-speed Internet service. While the rest of the world operates in blink-of-the-eye communications, many areas of rural Kansas are still stuck with dial up. Dial-up communication can be as slow as snail-mail and a thousand times more frustrating.

Dial-up is Jim and Brenda Dooley's only access to the Internet on their Jewell County farm in north-central Kansas. Their story is the same as thousands of other rural inhabitants across the Sunflower State.

The Dooley's time on the Internet is limited because it takes forever to download. As a result they are behind the eight ball in obtaining necessary marketing and other farm-related information in today's rapidly changing agricultural world.

Like the Dooleys, Greenwood County rancher Matt Perrier finds himself in a similar situation. Perrier has given up trying to blog because it takes him an hour-and-a-half before he can connect. Then his dial-up crashes.

"When I need to send an advertisement or photos to help market our bulls or cattle, it's a roll of the dice to get that sent to where it needs to go," Perrier says. "And even if we do, sometimes it takes as long as five hours to get it out."

With on-line networking rapidly becoming the most effective way to communicate and conduct business, rural Kansans need high-speed Internet service

and they need it now. Communication via Internet is no longer a luxury. Bringing broadband access to all rural areas could provide economic and quality of life opportunities for rural Kansans.

Reliable access to rural broadbanding can also play a significant role in education, healthcare and access to new markets for agriculture and business. Rural education is increasingly dependent on broadband access. Healthcare providers are going to be even more dependent on it now that our government is increasingly mandating health information while using technology.

Rural business owners, whether they're farmers and ranchers or rural small businessmen, are increasingly being required to interact with government through the Internet.

Without fast, convenient and affordable Internet service an entire segment of this nation's people are being left behind. It's increasingly important for rural Kansas communities to be wired.

"When it comes to the future viability of rural life in Kansas, I can't think of a more important area of work," says Steve Baccus, an Ottawa County grain farmer who serves as president of Kansas Farm Bureau. "In nearly every respect, bringing

broadband Internet service to rural areas of Kansas is akin to rural electrification. That technology changed life on the farm and broadband access will do the same thing."

A new public-private collaborative effort led by Kansas Farm Bureau will provide a vital first step by identifying those communities and households not currently served. This mapping project will work toward taking full advantage of broadband infrastructure grant dollars recently approved by Congress in the federal economic stimulus package.

KFB and the Information Network of Kansas will also provide some of the mapping funds. Connected Nation, a Washington, D.C. nonprofit organization working to expand access and use of broadband Internet, has already begun mapping in Kansas.

Service providers began applying for stimulus money July 14. The time frame for increasing broadband access will depend on the public's response, how fast the money flows from the stimulus package and how quickly the providers build and service the much-needed networks.

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)