

Opinion



Another Viewpoint

Let voters decide

By David Anderson

Ohio joins the “just good enough” club in its bid to raise the state minimum wage from \$4.25 per hour to the federal minimum of \$5.15.

Almost 92,000 of Ohio’s working poor earn wages below the federal floor. After long ignoring the plight of minimum wage earners, state legislators suddenly felt a change of heart and voted for the 90 cents per hour raise.

Perhaps their vote signals a new sense of decency by the Statehouse crowd for those who toil at the bottom on the pay scale. But it’s more likely that a proposed ballot initiative to raise the wage prompted their change of heart!

The federal law requires all businesses that engage in interstate commerce or gross more than \$500,000 annually to pay their employees at least \$5.15 per hour. Many Ohio workers earn less than that work in sales, farm labor, and food service. Both the state and federal rules apply to non-tipped workers. In Ohio, employees who make at least \$30 in tips each month can be paid as little as \$2.13 per hour.

The ballot initiative launched by a coalition of labor unions, civil rights groups, and community organizations would increase Ohio’s minimum to \$6.85 per hour by 2007, with additional annual cost-of-living increases thereafter. Ohioans for a Fair Minimum Wage (OFMW) are gathering signatures to put their proposal on the November state ballot.

Amy Hanauer, executive director of Policy Matters Ohio (PMO), a non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute, says raising Ohio’s wage to \$6.85 per hour will help restore purchasing power and value of the minimum wage paycheck. She says the miserly federal wage has less purchasing power than at any time in more than fifty years. Boosting Ohio’s wage to the federal level won’t break the long-term poverty cycle for minimum wage workers.

Hanauer says further that raising the state wage to \$6.85 won’t help much without an annual cost-of-living adjustment. Indexing the wage to inflation protects earning power and ensures that workers won’t slip back into poverty. Nor does raising the wage to the federal level help thousands of Ohioans stuck on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. The adjustment offered by state lawmakers is too little and too late.

The working poor need more than a minimum raise to their minimum wage in order to climb out of poverty. If the OFMW initiative reaches the ballot box, voters, not politicians, will decide whether we can build an economy that creates opportunity and well-being for all of Ohio’s working people!

David Anderson is a former public radio news producer and reporter in Columbus, Ohio.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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Answers are blowing in the wind

What happened to March coming in like a lion and leaving like a lamb?

March gave us a blizzard with much welcomed moisture, but Sunday, being April 2 and having a few 70 mile per hour wind gusts, was a day I hope not to experience again very soon.

As a lunch guest was leaving our house in the wind I commented she might drive by later in the day and make sure our house wasn't at the bottom of the draw.

Living on a hill below a hill lends itself to some wicked downdrafts. Winds coming from the west over a set of cedar trees dump right on our house and shake, rattle and roll it (not literally of course).

I'm not afraid of wind, or even tornadoes, but I respect both. Having grown up in southwestern Kansas I'm familiar to both. In fact, I remember one Sunday afternoon similar to this past one, in which my dad took my family out tornado chasing.

Yep, we drove right into the path of a tornado until my mom insisted dad turn the car around and head back to town. That very tornado was one which lifted a house off its foundation and set it back on it just inches from where it was. The west back door became the east back door. Likewise, the east front door became the west front door.

House movers were hired to put the house squarely on the basement, but it was left in its newly aligned east-west direction. Creatures of habit most people are, I'll bet that made for a re-learning curve for the family which resided there.

What were you doing at two minutes and three seconds after 1 a.m. on Wednesday morning? If



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

you were like me, you were sound asleep.

However, there might have been a handful of people keeping an eye on an event which will never again take place. That event was a synchronization of time and date which resulted in a systematic display of the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. That's correct, two minutes and three seconds after 1 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Wednesday, April 5, 2006, was 01:02:03 04/05/06.

Don't feel bad if you missed it, so did I.

For Christians around the world, Sunday begins the most holy week of the year. The week marks in time the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Starting Sunday, individuals like me who follow the teachings of Christ will celebrate his entry into Jerusalem as a day we call Palm Sunday. Christ's entry into Jerusalem is one of only many events which changed the direction of mankind forever.

Thursday will be known to many as Maundy Thursday, also called Holy Thursday. This day serves as a commemoration when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples (John 13) and served the Last Supper (Luke 22). Next will come Good Friday, the day Christ was crucified on a cross

for the sins of the world (Matt. 27).

Finally, we'll celebrate Easter Sunday (Matt. 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20), this year on April 16.

The week's events are outlined in the Bible in several places, particularly the chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Not only are Christ's miracles, parables and commands shared with readers, the gift of salvation is shared likewise.

Over the past 21 centuries there have been numerous people who have tried to cast aside the reality that Christ died and three days later rose again. I feel so sad for those individuals and wish I could reach out and touch their lives with the truth.

Only days ago I saw a man on television saying he had proof Christ's followers participated in a hoax about his death and resurrection. I felt grieved for his faulted philosophy.

I believe with every inch of my being that Jesus Christ died, descended into hell and on the third day rose again. I also believe he ascended into heaven and will return to earth on a judgment day of which each and every human being will participate.

While many people hold out Christmas Eve and Christmas Day as the two most holy days of Christianity, had it not been for Christ's resurrection his birth would not have been necessary.

If you haven't visited a church lately, please take time this week to refresh your faith. If you don't know Jesus Christ, please take time to seek out a church and learn about him. It will truly change your life.

Good to see youth stand for a cause, but...

From The Garden City Telegram

Latino students are making a statement.

As Congress debates immigration reform, many Latino and non-Latino students alike have walked out of schools throughout the nation to protest proposals to stiffen immigration laws.

Walkouts have drawn thousands of students to the streets in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and other cities with high Latino populations. No students in Garden City schools, with a significant number of Hispanic students, reportedly left class to protest.

All students should understand the First Amendment-guaranteed rights of Americans to peacefully assemble and express their viewpoints.

In that vein, students who participated in demonstrations had a chance to learn valuable lessons that extended beyond the compelling matter of immigration reform.

But when asked, a good number of students who walked out of school didn't know why they were protesting.

For many, the walkouts were little more than an opportunity to skip class.

And that detracted from the students' mission of protesting proposed legislation that would crack down on illegal immigrants.

Demonstrations after school or on weekends, when students would have to sacrifice their own time to the cause, would have made more of an impact — and also showed that the students care

about education.

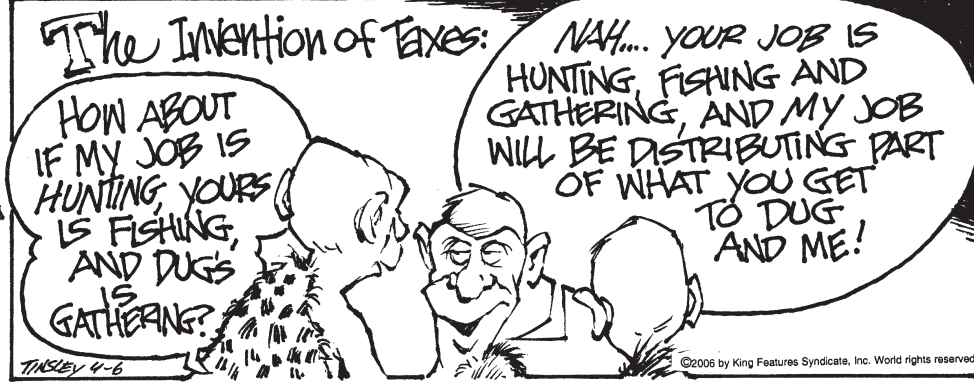
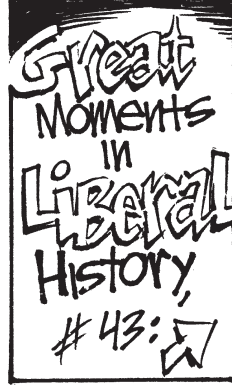
Debate over ways to strike a balance between controlling the borders and enabling illegal immigrants to gain citizenship offers a number of important topics for classroom discussion and learning.

That said, it was encouraging to see youth engage and stand up for a cause. The protests showed many teens today are indeed willing and eager to make a difference.

But while the youth who participated in the protests brought attention to an important issue, walking out on school and the teachers who have been steadfast in their mission to educate all students was a misguided way to make a point.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

