editorial page

Tribune Press

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Editorial....

Proposed minimum wage increase will result in cost hikes, job losses

In the coming months New Yorkers can expect to pay more for a Value Meal. They may also expect to wait a little longer for it. Last week the New York State Assembly voted to approve a minimum wage increase. What, at first blush may seem like a good idea may, in reality, be bad for many of us.

The amended legislation would raise the minimum wage from the current $5.15 an hour to $6.75 an hour. Is a minimum wage increase needed? Yes. Should it be increased by $1.60 an hour? Most definitely not!

What the increase, if approved by the New York State Senate and Governor George Pataki, will mean is that businesses that employ young high school aged people, such as McDonalds and a large variety of other employers, will have to find a way to make up the $1.60 an hour lost by the minimum wage increase. I wonder how they can do that? Expect to see the result in the price of your meal.

Another option would be to get by with fewer workers. Which will result in poorer service, longer waits and less happy customers. I'm just using McDonalds as an example because the fast food giant is often the first job for many teenagers. Under the Golden Arches they learn responsibility, find out what working is all about and make enough money to make their life a little more enjoyable.

Consider what an increase in the minimum wage will mean to the small employer, the guy who owns his own business and struggles to get by with a couple of part-time, minimum wage employees. How will he be able to afford the increase to $6.75 per hour? What the increase will mean is fewer jobs available for our youngsters.

I am in favor of treating people fairly. I am in favor of paying people a wage that they can survive on. I have no problem with seeing a person trying to raise a family making $6.75 an hour. Certainly anyone working 40-hours a week and attempting to get by and raise a family is entitled to be making $6.75 an hour or more. Maybe the minimum wage should apply only to full-time workers and have a lower wage available to high school workers. If this were the law we would suddenly have hundreds of high school workers employed in place of older people who are attempting to raise a family.

Maybe the state should look towards more incentive programs that would help an employer, especially a "little guy" pay for his employee's wages. If a small business owner is willing to hire people full time and pay them $6.75 an hours (which amounts to $270 a week and slightly over $14,000 a year based on a 40-hour week) than maybe the state should be willing to step in with some help to either the employer or the employee.

How about the state and federal governments joining forces to insure that the person earning the $270 a week actually takes a large percentage of it home with them. For years and years we have all heard the statement, "but how much do you take home after taxes?" I realize that there are systems in place to help poorer families get back more money when filing their taxes but this, in most instances, is used to pay bills, buy large items that most families can't usually afford without going in debt for, or maybe splurging a bit.

But when the income tax money is gone these people are, once again, living week-to-week, struggling to get by. Maybe if they actually saw more of the money they earned week to week life would be a little more enjoyable.

Certainly there is no one answer to the problem of the working poor, minimum wage and all of those kids who are looking for a first job. Maybe the answer is an increase of 60 cents an hour to $5.75 and a more aggressive attitude by the state and federal government to help those families that really need help. I'm talking about full-time employees who are attempting to raise a family while receiving minimum wage.

I totally agree with the State Assembly wanting to help poor families by increasing the minimum wage to $6.75 per hour. However, I can't see the new 17-year old employee at McDonalds earning the same amount to put my hamburger and fries in a bag and tell me to have a nice day.

The issue of minimum wage needs to come down to something more than a numbers game. The minimum wage issue should be included in a package that benefits both workers and those willing to help the working poor by becoming involved in state or federal programs that will benefit both the employee and the employer.

Such a program should help keep an employee happy and productive on the job, which can only benefit us all. People who enjoy what they're doing and feel like they are being treated fairly tend to be more productive and willing to go the extra mile to see that the job is done the right way.

Do the poor need more money? Of course they do. But the state needs to consider the consequences before ordering New York business owners to start shelling out more money. It's easy to tell somebody they have to do something. It's difficult to tell them how to make it work.

-Dick Sterling

Rock Island 4-H Club news

[illegible] meeting of the Rock Island 4-H Club was June [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] at the White church. We are [illegible] planning [illegible]

Local students to attend pharmacy college

Cragg B[illegible] and M[illegible] [illegible] of Gouverneur [illegible] College of Pharmacy [illegible] the District of Pharmacy program. Cragg is the son of Kathleen [illegible] and [illegible] Michael is the [illegible] Diane Tu[illegible] and William Tu[illegible]. B[illegible] are grad[illegible] uates of Gouverneur High School.

Letter to the editor

To the Editor

Recently, my father, Wendell L. Yerdon, passed away after a very brief illness with pancreatic cancer. Dr. Edward Reason gave an accurate diagnosis, sending him to Samaritan Health Center for radiation treatment with oncologist, Dr. Poggi. Due to the aggressiveness of this type of cancer, after finishing radiation he opted to return to E.J. Noble. While my father did receive wonderful care in Watertown, his care here in Gouverneur was unsurpassable. Everyone at the entire E.J. Noble facility went the extra mile to ensure the total comfort of my father, to give a kind comforting word to my mother and my entire family.

The purpose of this letter... Please support E.J. Noble Hospital and Auxiliary. E.J. Noble truly is a fine facility, having a gifted wide range of medical personnel at our fingertips.

Sincerely,
Vickie L. Yerdon-Graves

Steve Burke steps down as chair of county Dems

By Nancy Given-McConnell

Steven Burke took the 33 committee members assembled for the full committee meeting June 5 by surprise when he announced he would be stepping down as chairman of the St. Lawrence County Democratic Party after the September 10 primary.

Former Chairman Walter Basmsajian of Massena was in the process of criticizing Mr. Burke for remarks he had made on the Public Radio station as well as Mr. Burke's criticism and his views on the way the state committee ran the party convention in New York City May 23, when they allegedly shut out gubernatorial candidate Andrew M. Cuomo, when Mr. Burke made the announcement he was quitting.

Mr. Basmasjian felt Mr. Burke was out of line and bitter about the convention and that it would reflect on the county democrats who are dependent on state democratic financial support. Mr. Burke assured Mr. Basmasjian the opinions expressed at the convention and on public radio were exclusively his and did not reflect the opinions of the local party. He said he asked public radio to clarify the statement as reflecting his opinion rather than that of the party that very morning, of which he says they did.

Mr. Burke insisted his decision to step down was not reached as a result of the controversy which transpired from the state convention. He says he has purchased a considerable amount of rental property elsewhere in the state and it's time he moved on.

He says he would like to spend more time with his family and after serving so many years as chairman feels he needs a rest from it. Mr. Burke was chairman from 1993 to 1996 and was reelected in January 1999.

The committee also voted to close the party headquarters on Gouverneur Street in Canton over the protest of Mr. Burke. They plan to direct funds being used to maintain the headquarters to other election and party purposes.

Members of the Gouverneur Volunteer Fire Department were among the dozens of departments to march during the annual Northern New York Volunteer Firemen Association's convention which was held this past weekend in Tupper Lake. Also marching were volunteers from Harrisville.

Answers come from county on Kilkarney Road work in Fowler

by Robin Jarboe

The Town of Fowler board members took a road trip through the subdivision of the Kilkarney Road residences in the past month and made a report to builder Jeff Stowell regarding their findings on his request for the town to maintain the roads.

At the June board meeting, Supervisor William Lutz stated that the members could see where more work was needed on the road in the housing development.

Since the members road trip, a county engineer visited the site and prepared a report on Kilkarney Road.

County officials also noted that in order to verify what may be in the base of the road that some testing may have to be done.

Fowler Supervisor Lutz said that if any testing was to be done it would be at the expense of Jeff Stowell's (CS) construction company.

Supervisor Lutz read the letter received in June from the St. Lawrence County Department of Highways in Canton aloud to all who attended the meeting.

The letter from William Dashnaw, superintendent of highways, stated that he and Engineer K[illegible] B[illegible] reviewed the Kilkarney Courts road extension and they identified items regarding the construction and layout of the road which appear not to meet the [illegible] regulations.

Following are the items noted by the county highway department that need correction:

A town's subdivision regulation requires road ditches to be constructed at a depth of 1.5 feet below the height of the center of the road. The majority of the Kilkarney Courts road has no defined ditches.

It was noted in the county report that several areas of the Kilkarney Court road has inadequate drainage.

Observed by the engineers was that throughout the roadway are large potholes filled with water which need drainage installed to promote water runoff.

A lack of proper roadway crown and roadside ditches are the cause of water laying in potholes and water ponded along the edge of the roadway, noted Supervisor Dashnaw.

One culvert that crosses under the roadway appeared to undersized and the outlet end of the culvert plus the outlet ditch had water present which indicates the slope of the ditch is not properly constructed.

Width of the roadway including shoulders appears to be 15 feet, remarked the engineers. The minimum width including shoulders per the town's regulations is [illegible] feet.

Supervisor Dashnaw also made [illegible] ing inadequate. The town requires the curves to be designed [illegible] miles per hour.

Several large stones greater than six inches in diameter were [illegible] way. This indicates a subbase is not at the required 12 inches deep. The report noted that this will continue to cause maintenance problems and they should be removed.

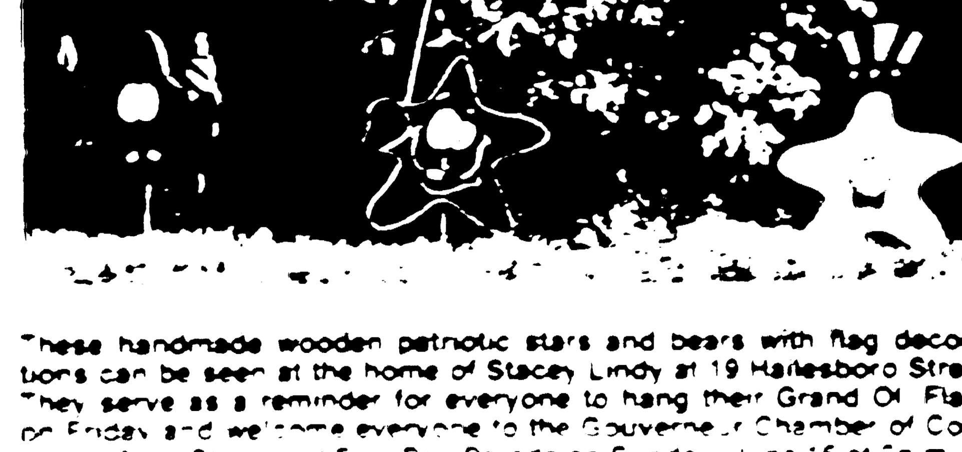
Additional investigations will have to be completed to determine if the edge of the roadway is right in indicating that the subbase material had been placed upon vegetation, which it appears.

The three areas of concern to be addressed are 1) drainage of the subdivision and roadway, 2) reviewing a site plan with a scale of one inch equals 50 feet, curve data and other specifications that show how the road design meets the requirements of the specified design speed and 3) testing to confirm the specific subbase materials and quantities.

County officials require the developer to submit the hydraulic analysis used to size the roadway culverts and the surface drainage system for the entire subdivision in order to see how the roadways and its ditches can move the surface waters from the low areas of the subdivision.

Jeff Stowell said that he "appreciated the findings" and also requested a letter from the Town of Fowler accompanying the letter from the county. The landowners will also receive a copy of the documentation.

Supervisor Lutz said that he would send a letter to Jeff and submit it along with the county's letter.



These handmade wooden patriotic stars and bears with flag decorations can be seen at the home of Stacey Lindy at 19 Harlesboro Street. They serve as a reminder for everyone to hang their Grand Ol' Flags on Friday and welcome everyone to the Gouverneur Chamber of Commerce Auto Show and Flag Day Parade on Sunday, June 16 at 2 p.m.

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