



THE INTELLIGENCER

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GUEST OPINION

Wealth inequality demands a higher minimum wage

By ROTIMI ADEOYE

In President Obama's recent State of the Union address, one of the main points he stressed was the need to raise the minimum wage for Americans across the board. In February, Obama put forward an executive order to raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour for federal contract workers. This move is the latest signal of the president's willingness to use executive action to bypass a Congress that has repeatedly stated it is not willing to work with him. He stressed this method in his State of the Union speech.

As 2014 began, 13 states raised their minimum wage. Montana raised its minimum wage from \$7.80 to \$7.90, Oregon from \$8.95 to \$9.10, and New York from \$7.25 to \$8.

Though it's great these states took the initiative to raise their minimum wage, thus encouraging other states to follow suit, there remains a fundamental issue: These wages are still below the living wage. The living wage is the wage per hour an individual must earn to live and support himself, and it varies by state. Unfortunately, only 76 percent of the states that raised their minimum wage set income at a level where one can support a family. Hence, these changes are not enough.

Some would argue that raising the federal minimum wage would be bad for workers in that employers would be forced to make staff cuts and thus cause a downward shift in demand. I disagree. Raising the minimum wage is basically a \$450 billion stimulus; more



income is delivered directly into the hands of Americans who are most likely to spend it. This was displayed in New Jersey by Princeton's Alan Krueger, who recently stepped down as chairman of the White House Council on Economic Advisers, and Berkeley's David Card.

In their 1994 study "Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry," Krueger surveyed whether an increase in New Jersey's minimum wage reduced employment at fast-food restaurants by comparing it with seven border counties in Pennsylvania. They examined a total of 687 restaurants and found that the new \$5.05 minimum wage "had no effect on total employment in New Jersey's fast-food industry, and possibly had a small positive effect."

But this issue is just the tip of the iceberg.

This matter really highlights the bigger issue at hand that branches far wider than Republicans versus Democrats. That issue is wealth inequality.

Numbers show that the top 20 percent of the nation's wealthiest individuals own a little over 80 percent of U.S. wealth. What's worse is that most Americans think the top 20 percent owns only about 50 percent to 55 percent of the nation's wealth. Those are alarming figures.

One could simply argue these numbers are products of a "capitalist" society that was planned to only benefit the wealthiest and should not be surprising. But that is not the true intended purpose of capitalism. American revolutionary thinker Thomas Paine proposed a minimum income in one of his writings, "Agrarian Justice," as compensation for "loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property." It's amazing how far this has deteriorated, that now even a modest increase in wages is met with bitter opposition.

It is imperative that as prices rise, we adjust the minimum wage so workers will be able to afford basic goods and services. What we're doing is putting workers at a disadvantage without even giving them a chance to play. Raising the minimum wage puts everyone in the position to compete for the American dream.

Rotimi Adeoye is a senior at Central Bucks West and vice president of The Student Voice Project, which is dedicated to giving students a voice in government and politics. He is also president of Central Bucks Young Democrats of America.



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We urge North Korea to refrain from provocative actions that aggravate tensions and instead focus on fulfilling its international obligations and commitments.

STATE DEPARTMENT
SPOKESWOMAN JEN PSAKI,
AFTER NORTH KOREA FIRED TWO
MORE SCUD-CLASS SHORT-RANGE
MISSILES INTO THE SEA IN AN
APPARENT ONGOING PROTEST
OF JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOUTH
KOREA.

OUR VIEW

Buck Up revisited

A year ago at this time, The Intelligencer and its sister paper in Levittown, the Courier Times, launched the Buck Up Bucks County fundraising campaign. The goal was to collect \$200,000 to renovate the inadequate and rundown kitchen at the Bucks County Emergency Homeless Shelter in Bristol Township.

There was considerable risk we would not meet that goal. The county remained in the throes of the Great Recession, and lots of folks were out of work or in some way underemployed. And we had just come out of the Christmas season. In addition to finding ways of making the holiday a nice one for their own families, many residents dug deep to generously help the less fortunate in our community, either through the newspaper's Give A Christmas campaign, their own church or by giving to other holiday fundraisers.

So if folks were suffering from charity fatigue, it would not have come as a surprise. To the contrary, we were surprised — in fact, flabbergasted — at the response.

We based our campaign on the old collection can idea. Businesses all across the county at first agreed and then clamored to put a can on their counter. School children jumped in with penny collections. All sorts of organizations contacted us to get involved.

And the donations rolled in. It was truly amazing and reassuring, and oh so heartwarming. Asked to take care of their own, Bucks County citizens responded with kindness and determination. We not only met our goal, we surpassed it, collecting a total of \$282,000.

Unbelievable!

A year later, the shelter, which serves three meals a day to between 70 and 80 people in need of temporary support, has an updated and expanded kitchen. But it also has a new pantry and food drop-off areas thanks to those of you who pushed the campaign well beyond its goal.

"The community's generosity above and beyond the \$200,000 goal enabled us to renovate twice as much space as we originally planned," said David Ford, Family Service's director of development, a few months ago as his organization prepared to show off the new digs at an open house. And then there's this: "One hundred percent of the money raised went directly to the project," he said.

Every penny.

That's a heck of an accomplishment, as was the Buck Up campaign. We might have dreamed up the idea, but it was the generous people who make up this caring community who made it a success. Thank you for your contributions: your big checks, your dollar bills, your nickels and even your pennies. It is with great satisfaction and incredible pride that we look back a year later at what we accomplished together.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who's the extremist?

Political insiders and the establishment media have labeled members of tea party groups as extreme. Let me set the record straight.

The tea party stands for fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government and free markets. Does that sound extreme?

Is it extreme to be concerned about a federal government that spends more, borrows more and taxes more each year? Or is it extreme to ignore a \$17 trillion debt and an unfunded liability of nearly \$100 trillion?

Is it extreme for citizens to criticize their government for overstepping its constitutional limits?

Is it extreme to promote the growth of small businesses in our nation? Or is it extreme for government bureaucrats to create stifling, complicated and unworkable regulations?

Is it extreme to oppose a health reform law when you know it hurts people with higher premiums, higher taxes and higher out-of-pocket costs, where millions have lost coverage? Or is it extreme to ignore what is in the bill and pass it anyway, hoping it won't disrupt too many lives?

Is it extreme to try to change laws by holding peaceful rallies that start and end on time, where participants leave public spaces as pristine as they found them? Or is it extreme to occupy public areas for weeks, block traffic, create crime and trash and cost taxpayers millions of dollars for police and sanitation?

Is it extreme to support candidates in primaries who challenge incumbents that you feel have not done a good job? Or is it extreme

to let political party leaders select one candidate, usually the incumbent, the result being a taxpayer-paid primary with no choice for voters?

Is it extreme for citizens to voluntarily express their constitutional right to petition their government on issues they are concerned about? Or is it extreme to call these citizens terrorists, stupid or racist?

Those who disagree with us have every right to oppose our positions. They do not have a right to demean us with name-calling, and they certainly don't have the right to prevent us from exercising our rights by using the power of government to shut us down.

**Ross Schriftman, proud member
Tea Party Patriots
Eastern Montgomery County**

Sentimental value

I'm responding to the March 3 letter, "No money for the clock," by Albert Duffield. I for one would like very much to have Hatboro Council appropriate the money to have the Loller Building clock repaired and in working order. Hatboro was founded in 1776, and there are not too many historical items or landmarks left.

My first six years of schooling were spent at Loller Academy and my last six years at Hatboro High School, Class of 1946. I have personal and sentimental feeling to have the clock at the Loller Building in operation. Yes, I do look at the clock in the tower when passing through Hatboro and hope for many years to come that it stays in repair.

**Joyce P. Clopper
Warminster Township**

Donations will cover most of clock repair

To the writer of the March 3 letter, "No money for the clock," it is unfortunate that some people see very little value in preserving our historic properties and inventions. The clock in question reflects the creativity and ingenuity of one man, a local clockmaker, Isaiah Lukens. This clock was probably one of the first of its kind in North America, and to not restore it would be unforgiving.

In regard to funding, approximately 94 percent of the money received for the clock restoration came from business and private donations. Borough council made a \$3,750 contribution and such was greatly appreciated, but to claim this project was covered on the backs of taxpayers is silly.

I am sure the Clock Restoration Committee values the writer's privilege to editorialize, but to enable him to better understand its quest, the committee is sending him its Lukens Clock Restoration Brochure in hopes that he may wish to make a small contribution.

**Lin Magaha Sr.
Hatboro**

Enough of Obama

Obama is an affirmative action beneficiary who is hailed as a genius, but he is actually a fraud — a figment of David Axelrod's leftist imagination. Being black wasn't enough to climb the school and career ladder, so he said he was foreign, too.

Speaking of boring, is Obama the most boring president since Gerald Ford or what? For a guy who is supposed to be "brilliant,"

THE VENT

Send your short comments to intell_letters@calkins.com, with INTELL-VENT on the subject line. Comments may also be submitted by mail. Full name and hometown required.

It was disappointing to read that Reps. Fitzpatrick and Meehan voted to weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and to keep secret the names of political donors to nonprofit organizations.

Michael Frank, Doylestown

Finally for both Democrats and now Republicans, raising the debt ceiling is no longer an issue or a problem. What a relief. Now, we can magically spend more money than we can ever pay back. Tell your kids and grandkids the good news.

Jim Duffy, Horsham

In warning Vladimir Putin about intervening militarily in Ukraine ("there will be costs"), President Obama would be wise to remember it was the same Mr. Putin who saved the president's bacon when he likewise went out on a limb with his Syrian "red line." Such idle threats serve to make the president and the country appear weak and directionless.

Stephen Hanover, Plumstead

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