POINT COUNTER - POINT

Saving the Middle Class

Luke Mcdonald
Comics Editor

When you look at your paycheck every week, do you feel like you should be earning more?

It has been nine years since the last minimum wage increase to $5.15. Since then, the cost of living here in America has gone up with the rate of inflation, which was about 3.9% last year. Salaries, grocery prices, gas prices, and public transportation fares have all risen with the steadily rising prices of the economy. The only thing that has not risen to compensate is the minimum wage.

According to www.infoplease.com, minimum wage has decreased in value since 1998. When the minimum wage was last raised in 1997, $5.15 was worth about $5.03. Now, that same $5.15 per hour is worth only $4.04.

With the past minimum wage, a full-time minimum wage worker only earned a total yearly income of just over ten thousand dollars. That was below the poverty line of just over eighteen thousand dollars for a family of three.

Those families who work minimum wage jobs usually work multiple jobs just to keep food on the table. Because of this, the family dynamic of minimum wage workers suffers. This leads to more complicated problems and grey areas, such as teen violence, drug abuse and domestic violence.

The minimum wage debate has gone on for years. Without a wage that even resembles a possible life of comfort, more and more Americans will fall into poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor will increase, and America's middle class will fade away into nothing.

As you may have heard, the minimum wage was raised to $6.95 on October 1. The goal number is $7.15 by 2007, a full two dollars higher than the $5.15 it was.

Many small businesses oppose this because it will mean raising prices on their products or laying off staff. Raising product prices increases the possibility of losing customers, so many small companies may consider laying off staff. What these small businesses have not considered is that with higher wages, people will have more money to spend, thereby offsetting the higher pay rates.

> "Those families who work minimum wage jobs usually work multiple jobs just to keep food on the table."

America is the land of opportunity, the land of equality and the land of freedom. So why do we oppress our lower-middle and lower classes with wages that don't allow them the chances that the rich have, like higher education and jobs that offer good futures. The free market economy is eating away at America's middle class. A new, higher minimum wage will help bolster the American middle class.

Wages Up Employment Down

David Gumbleton
Staff Writer

New clothes, shoes, more fast food. All things that most people believe they will be able to afford on the new $7.15 minimum wage signed into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm. This is all possible if you still have a job. How can companies afford to pay workers around two dollars more per hour and keep all of them. This will especially hurt teens The biggest lure to companies right now is that teens will work for less money than most adults.

Under the new minimum wage workers will receive at least $7.15, will recieve companies might as well hire the adult worker who can most likely work full-time and be around for years instead of just a summer or two. Also it will become harder for workers to enter into the work force as there will be fewer entry level jobs. The minimum wage requirements are in good in theory but will hurt some people so much that the benefits of it will be negligent.

All of a sudden workers proforming skilled labor who were making a few dollars above the old minimum wage are minimum wage workers. Now there is less incentive to learn a trade or advance yourself in the workforce.

The increased minimum wage will also gives teens a reason to drop out of high school. Why stay in school to get the higher paying jobs you need to graduate to get when you can drop out and make just as much money. In the long run this will support an uneducated workforce and more and more jobs will have to be out sourced.

The increased wages for a small amount of Americans is not worth the loss of jobs, and the lack of reward for skilled laborers. Without skilled labor the entire American economy will fall apart. This, in turn will create even fewer jobs.

It is estimated that every 10 percent increase of the minimum wage will cause 100,000 jobs to be lost. The people who lose the jobs will be exactly the people who need help the most. When a company hires out of a now larger workforce they hire the highest skilled workers. This will leave the the low skilled workers with no chance to get jobs and learn the skills necessary to advance in society.

Advocates of the raised minimum wage say that it will help people come out of poverty and promote spending to help boost the economy. However Dr. Peter Brandon of the Institute for Research on Poverty conducted a study on on how raising the minimum wage effected the transition from work to welfare. He found that mothers on welfare in states that raised their minimum wage remained on welfare 44 percent longer than mothers on welfare in states where the minimum wage was not raised.

On top of everything else prices will rise. Who is going to pay for the extra wages? We will. With with higher prices.

The next issue is how many people actually make only minimum wage. In 2003 only nine percent of minimum wage workers were heading a household. Most minimum wage workers still live at home and do not have anyone who is dependent on their income to survive. Keeping minimum wage low, keeps jobs available and kids in school.

WHINING

What Do You Think About the Senior Class's School Spirit This Year?

"Way more school spirit this year than last year because of homecoming and everything."
Denzell McClinton-Bowden
senior

"School spirit is kinda down this year, don't get as much opportunity to show it as last year."
Darryl Poplar
senior

"I think it was better last year, I saw more school spirit last year."
Abby Ferguson
junior

"There is not much school spirit."
Olivia Kuhl
sophomore

My Day in the Life of a Freshman

Sean Panich
Opinion Editor

Whips aren't on the list of items supplied to teachers, but that hasn't stopped a couple of the Freshmen Academy teachers from cracking down on their students. Elevated discipline is one of the many differences from the rest of Norrix that I noticed while spending a day in the "B House" of the freshmen high school, an experiment that taught me a lot about how the newest class goes through the day.

Tiny class sizes are another unique quality that make the Academy a school of its own. Just because the newly configured B and C wings are barely cousins to the rest of Norrix, doesn't make the new program a bad thing. I just wish that Norrix's space could be expanded so the rest of the classes could be bite sized the way many of the classes in the Academy are, but at least for the time being, that is not an option. This brief one year span spent in smaller than normal classes may be giving the ninth graders a false sense of what the rest of the school is like. I know that our administration is trying to ease the transition into high school, but the program is inadvertently delaying new students from getting the full high school experience.

The way the Academy runs now will not make the move from ninth to tenth grade any different than the move previous classes made from eigth to ninth. I'm not saying that you are thrown into the fire and things get rough when you go from eigth to ninth (or with the Academy in place ninth to tenth), but high school is a four year experience, with each year making you feel older and more mature. Let's just hope that their first block elective classes expose the freshmen to the real school and the other students enough so they won't be overwhelmed at the start of their sophomore year.

For the most part, students in the honors classes in the Academy are

dealt with like mature young adults, but this was not true of all the classes. Some of the teachers in the larger, non-advanced classes in the Academy talk to the students like they are back at middle school, which is not necessary, giving the freshmen little freedom (no backpacks in class, for example) and not much responsibilty. When I was a freshman, I remember being treated similarly to the way I am now, with respect, in honors classes and regular ones, but never like I was getting my smelly diaper changed.

The Academy is a lot like junior high, in that you stay with the same group and share the same teachers for most of the day, with the exception of either gym or an elective (just like at middle school) that allows a student to explore the rest of the school for a short period of time.

Most of the students in the classes I visited during my day in the life of a freshmen didn't really seem to notice me. But then again, many of those are the same students who think I'm a teacher and ask me for directions in the hallways. So, without distraction or fear of being called on to answer a question in a subject I had forgotten everything about, I sat back and learned what it was like to be in a small, and as a result of it's size, well-organized class, a luxury I have rarely experienced in my 13 years of Kalamazoo Public schooling.

Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 2

Dear Knight Life,

I am writing this letter about one football game, one girl's basketball game, and two boy's basketball games that were rescheduled for ten a.m on Saturday.

None of the fans that show up to the game during the scheduled time will want to show up at a game a 10:00 in the morning. Norrix does not have much spirit but the night games are fun, and a lot of people like to go to them. I understand that administrations are trying to prevent fights, but I didn't know they wanted to hinder funding in the process.

I was a little disturbed when I found that out on the news. Hearing about the young women and grownup's from the community participating in the fights really upset me.

I don't think that a few people's mistakes should affect everybody else. Just because a group of people got into a fight doesn't mean everybody did. The administration should not be punish everybody for the actions of a few.

Thank you for your time.

A concerned student,
Sarah Leip

Props

-The Seniors-Way to Stand Up!

-New Administrators-Welcome to the Blue.

-Varsity Football- You may be losing, but you're always winning in our hearts!

-Teddy Grahams- All the yummy goodness of bears without fear of being mauled.

-Broadway Fantasy 15-Showtunes never sounded so good!

Stops

-Sickness- Seems like everyone is coughing and sneezing

-No School Store? What For?

-The Detroit Lions Losing-Follow the example our other three sports teams are setting.

-Not Wrapping Wraps- Call it something else if you can't put in the effort to make a simple fold or two.

-The Lack of Fries- Last time I checked, potatoes were vegetables.

Kali Burnett, sophomore

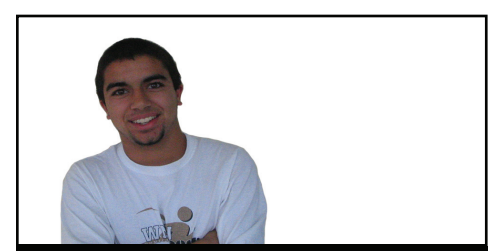
"I don't like it. That's the only thing I ate, now I either bring food from home or eat nachos."

Cheryl White, senior

"I hate that. People don't pay for stuff anymore because now they don't have as many choices."

Evan McGlinn, junior

"It sucks because we want good food. Now they give us ice cream, which is less healthy than the food from the store."



Kumar Kothari, junior

"It doesn't bother me. If people were stealing from the store they should have tightened security instead of closing it down."