

Should fast-food workers be paid higher wages?

By: Mike Francis

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It's unglamorous work to scrape the flattop stove, empty the deep-fat fryer and deal with impatient customers. Yet fast-food outlets always seem to have applicants to carry out these thankless tasks for [\\$9.10 an hour](#) -- or less in most other states.

Thursday was a day when minimum wage workers around the world carried out protests, calling for better wages, as [the Los Angeles Times and others reported](#). And now the arguments are hardening.

Some jurisdictions [such as Seattle](#) are moving to raise the minimum wage on their own, a move that could immediately affect more than 100,000 low-wage workers.

It didn't take long for outsiders to say [the city was moving too dramatically](#). And the [Cato Institute and others say](#) the increase would hurt the low-wage people it aims to help, by reducing the number of available jobs.

The debate [has been heated in Portland](#), too.

The protests are effective because they focus attention on a common experience: Those moments when you stand on the customer side of the counter, watching someone hustle to wrap your low-cost meal and deliver it to you with a smile.

Is the preparer a young person, working his first job? A mother whose kids are still at home? Someone passing through minimum wage country, or somebody who seems to be stuck in it?

How much should his or her work be worth?

-Mike Francis