



Advocating for workers

Chris Bangert-Drowns
October 16, 2014

The column "[Maximize wage, minimize logic](#)," published in Monday's issue of The Diamondback, attempts to make a case against raising the state minimum hourly wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10. But numerous flaws mar the columnist's logic.

The first flaw is found in the columnist's claim that a wage increase would result in "unwanted consequences," namely an increase in the unemployment rate. He cites studies conducted by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the libertarian Cato Institute, and the center-right American Action Network, which all highlight an inverse correlation between wages and employment.

While all reputable sources, I charge the columnist with selection bias. [A 2013 Center for Economic and Policy Research meta-analysis](#) of 1,492 recent studies shows a consensus quite the opposite of the author's claim: An increase in the minimum wage will have "no discernable effect on employment." The majority of writing regarding minimum wage increases points toward no correlation between employment and wage. The author of Monday's column cherry-picked three sources to support his claim.

Most firms, when faced with a wage increase, will find ways to swallow the costs that do not result in a reduction in workforce. These alternative methods include price increases, developments in organizational efficiency, wage compression and decreased labor turnover. The success of these methods varies from firm to firm but will nonetheless significantly compensate for increased costs.

The author's second mistake is claiming that a minimum-wage increase would benefit only the "needs of the few." A significant portion of the working class makes between \$7.25 and \$10.10 per hour and would thus benefit from a wage increase. According to the Brookings Institute, an increase in the minimum wage would affect up to 35 million workers.

Disregarding the author's statistical inaccuracies, I must take issue with the weak ideological rhetoric peppered throughout this column. The columnist has built a straw man: He claims advocates for a higher minimum wage, such as myself, justify our demands because we feel it's "right," are "exploiting the poor for sympathy," are "imprudent" and "illogical" for being proponents of a minimum-wage increase and have fallen prey to "groupthink and liberal indoctrination" at this university. This is both patronizing and entirely false.

Advocates do not fight for an increase in the minimum wage because it makes us feel good, but rather because we realize that wages in real dollars have remained stagnant for the past four decades. We do not exploit the poor for sympathy, but rather throw ourselves on the picket lines to fight alongside workers who struggle to make ends meet. We are not imprudent for questioning the columnist's claims, as any strong public debate requires dissent from all sides. We have not fallen prey to indoctrination, but rather have risen up to meet the call for a renewed and re-energized labor movement.

As a leftist and an activist, I condemn the columnist's misrepresentation of our work. We do not claim to have the answers to every policy decision, but we do have the dedication to organize students and workers to ensure decision-makers hear our voice. The columnist has proven to be inaccurate in his statistical analysis, wanting in his rhetorical ability and patronizing in his certainty that his version of "truth will prevail." I challenge all students to hold themselves to a high standard when discussing issues as critical as this.