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The price of forgetting the holidays

Megan Troutman Apr 3, 2018



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When I first saw it on the ballot I thought: *oh, no; let's be smarter than this.*

And then, March 21, 2017, Proposition 414 was elected to increase minimum wage for employees working in Flagstaff's city limits.

We were not smarter than this.

Under this law, the minimum wage increased to \$11 an hour January 1 and will continue to increase to \$15.50 by the year 2022. So most NAU students saw “minimum wage increase,” and thought, “oh yeah, I'd love to make more money in my hourly shift.” But

think about it — higher wages for employees means more employees will be laid off and small businesses will have a hard time keeping up.

Oh yeah, and the minimum wage increase exempted wage increases for NAU student jobs.

So no, we were definitely not smarter than this.

This all happened back in January, but I'm bringing it up now, because now I'm reliving the pain and embarrassment my peers caused me when they voted for Prop. 414.

Last weekend, on Easter Sunday, I almost hip-checked a 12-year-old in an Easter egg hunt so I could win the first place prize of \$20. Let me explain.

As a kid, I was ecstatic when Easter came around. It was a crucial part of the chocolate trifecta — Easter, Halloween and Christmas. And every year at the crack of dawn I would wake up my parents with my brother and sister, ready to find all of the eggs.

Fast-forward to today, and 22-year-old Megan is living her best life in an apartment where the oven sometimes shorts half the building's electricity, where I share a bedroom to make rent, and where I'm eating ramen and leftovers most nights because my work hours were cut (because of that fun minimum wage increase, making it nearly impossible for businesses to keep up with paying their employees).

So the purity of Easter festivities where I searched for colorfully-dyed eggs in my onesie is a thing of the past. This year, I forgot it was Easter weekend.

I'm far too busy worrying about paying my bills because my work hours were drastically cut. I'm worried about whether I'll be jobless and homeless in a few months when my lease runs out. I'm worried about my favorite small businesses that might buckle under the pressure of meeting employee wage demands. I didn't have time to think about Easter, and so I forgot about it.

But it worked out that I could see my family anyway and, staying true to our traditions, we had an Easter egg hunt. Then it was announced that whoever could find the most real (hardboiled and dyed) eggs would win \$20. Second place would win \$10, third \$5 and the loser nothing. I looked at my cousin, who is also living in an apartment with a decrepit oven, and our eyes narrowed in determination. My aunt counted down: three... two... one.

I have never sprinted so fast in my life; I was getting that \$20. It was going to be my gas money to get home to my window-leaking apartment that kind of smells like burnt fish. (Shout out to my roommate who burnt a fish a few weeks ago and put it out on the porch to cool down and then never threw it away before going to Europe.)

So I sprinted for those eggs and then bingo — the front porch. It was the motherload of all eggs and I shoveled those suckers into my cute little woven basket.

Needless to say, I won the \$20.

I forgot about the holidays because I was so invested in not being jobless and homeless, much like other NAU students.

A friend of mine works on campus, and he told me that the starting pay for his job is \$8.05 an hour but employees get a raise of \$.25 every semester. So, hypothetically, if a student held their job from freshman year all the way to second semester of senior year, they would now be making \$9.80 per hour.

I get paid \$11 per hour, and I am struggling.

The minimum wage increase has affected everyone who works in Flagstaff, even the students, and some of us, including myself, are not happy.

Megan Troutman is the editor-in-chief of The Lumberjack, Northern Arizona University's student newspaper. College Chronicles aims to connect FlagLive! readers to various aspects of campus life.