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Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

QuickPoint! – Will Oregon Price the Least-Skilled out of the Workforce...Too Slowly?

By Steve Buckstein

As Oregon's February legislative session approaches, Governor Kate Brown wants to head off a contentious [minimum wage ballot measure](#) that would raise Oregon's rate up to \$15 per hour over three years. But, her plan seems to [upset all sides](#).

She has determined that the Portland area minimum wage should be exactly \$15.52 by 2022. She has also figured out that the rest of the state should impose a \$13.50 minimum by 2022. "That is entirely too long" to wait, according to activists behind the ballot measure.

[Solid research](#) concludes raising the minimum wage at all is not an effective way to alleviate poverty. It is, however, an effective way to pander to voters who either don't read the economic literature, don't believe it, or don't care.

Oregon already has one of the highest minimum wage rates in the country at \$9.25 per hour. But, with some cities and states determined to raise their rates to \$15 soon, our Governor's \$15.52 Portland area proposal over six years may not be enough to keep us at the forefront of pricing the least-skilled people out of the workforce altogether.

Perhaps she should go for a \$30 minimum wage rate by 2030. Or a \$40 rate by 2040. Or...well, you get the idea.

Steve Buckstein is Founder and Senior Policy Analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.