

Raise the minimum wage

1 A last-minute compromise between state legislative leaders and Gov. Jerry Brown has cleared the way for a bill that would significantly increase the minimum wage in California over the next 2 1/2 years. Not surprisingly, the California Chamber of Commerce called it a "job killer."

5 The chamber is probably right about that to a degree; some employers will eliminate jobs, reduce hours or expand their payrolls more slowly as a consequence of the higher entry-level wage. But the measure will bring much-needed relief to thousands of Californians struggling to get by on the minimum wage today, as well as help the businesses where they'll spend their extra
10 dollars. Because the gains clearly offset the costs, Brown should sign the bill into law.

A full-time minimum-wage worker with one dependent barely makes enough today to stay above the federal poverty line of \$15,510 a year. But most minimum-wage workers don't have the luxury of full-time positions — and that's
15 often not by choice. The combination of minimum wages and limited hours translates into dismally low, poverty-level earnings.

Admittedly, it's foolish to think that government can raise wages without having an adverse effect on at least some employers. ...The 25% increase called for by Alejo's bill will be painful for minimum-wage employers with thin profit
20 margins, especially if labor represents most of their costs, as is typically the case. Those companies may respond by cutting workers' hours, which would only hurt the people Alejo is trying to help.

(251 words)

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