

OUR VIEW

Keeping a right image

In what appears to be a regular night on the job, an employee of one of the largest employers in the state was about to be robbed—twice: once by a pack of hoodlums, and again by his employer, the MGM Grand. This man was going to be sacrificed and denied the best chance to catch his attackers all because the MGM Grand was going to get a good-faith “pass” on reporting the incident by Las Vegas police. In a flurry of events that took place on the MGM property early Saturday morning and captured on surveillance video, a group of about 10 to 15 young men and women were seen on the videotape as they brutally beat and kicked this man for no apparent reason other than having fun. It all started when one person took the worker’s two-way radio out of his mobile cart, and as he responded, it set off the savage attack.

It was reported by the Las Vegas police early Monday to the media as a “robbery at the MGM.” Later that day, police decided to describe the location only as a “resort property on the Strip corridor” refusing to release or confirm the name of the property “as a feeling of a good-faith gesture” to the business. This pass to the MGM on reporting could have jeopardized the opportunity to jog someone’s memory of the events happening that morning and the perpetrators involved. In contrast, there have been countless crimes within the historic Westside where businesses and their names were smeared by the Las Vegas police in their description of a crime happening nearby, but not on their property—Seven Seas, the New Town Tavern that have gaming and other area businesses. No “good-faith” has been handed out to protect their business names in police reporting. This double standard of benevolent protection to the Las Vegas Strip with its mega resorts versus family-owned businesses in the ’hood robs the people of the confidence necessary to maintain a respect for the law. Sheriff Bill Young should take a serious look at how crime is reported and investigated in the 89106 area in comparison to the Strip corridor to restore relationships with small businesses in those neighborhood areas.

Counted Out?

It was alarming to discover the results of a computer analysis made by the Associated Press revealing that all school children’s test scores are not being counted equally. Throughout the U.S. it showed that states take advantage of a legal loophole in No Child Left Behind by not including test scores of minorities. Could it be that school districts throughout America still believe that minorities score lower on tests and, thus, jeopardize that school’s mandatory score levels? Would schools risk violating the laws? When the Supreme Court brought down segregation (Brown v. Board of Education) it was supposed to eliminate these kinds of acts of discrimination by public schools. Now 50 years later, we see that not very much has changed; it’s business as usual. Instead of states skirting around the law and putting it on the shoulders of Blacks and other minorities, it needs to put the necessary dollars into education to bring all students up to par. In Nevada, we still lag behind in student-to-funding ratio. With the annual growth of minorities (soon to become the majority) in the Clark County School District, how will our district handle the scores? It should only be by truth and dedication to excellence by all involved.



Minimum wage doesn't make a living

*Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice*

As we enter into another election season, there is one issue on the ballot that we should be concerned about: the \$1 increase in the minimum wage — an issue that incites political and economic debate. A recent *Review-Journal* poll of Nevada voters revealed that more than three-fourths of them support a ballot question that would increase the state’s minimum wage to \$6.15 per hour, \$1 more than the federally required \$5.15 per hour.

Because of an act passed under the Clinton administration, individual states now have the right to raise their own minimum wage rates above the current federal requirement (12 states have minimum wages higher than the federal level).

In 2004, Nevadans voted overwhelmingly (68.3 percent) to have the referendum placed on the ballot during this voting session. The question needs voter approval to amend the state constitution and will boost the state’s minimum wage each year by the rate of inflation to keep the wage at least \$1 above the federal standard.

In addition to the increase in minimum wage, we must also look at a movement that is taking root across the nation called “the living wage.” These issues make an urgent call to our community to address the poverty challenge with the assurance that fair



ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

wages will narrow the immoral gap between the rich and the poor, and they are vital for workers, for business and the future of our nation.

I need to make the distinction between minimum wage and living wage.

Minimum wage: the lowest hourly wage allowed by federal and state labor laws. It generally applies to unskilled or semi-skilled laborers working in service industries or manufacturing plants.

Living wage: refers to the minimum hourly wage necessary for a person to achieve a basic standard of living. This standard is generally considered to require that a person working 40 hours a week, with no additional income, should be able to afford housing, food, utilities, transportation, health care and a certain amount of recreation. This concept differs from the minimum wage because the latter is set by law and usually fails to meet the requirements of a living wage.

Opponents of the current minimum wage system suggest that current wages discourage the working poor from improving their skills or seeking higher paying jobs.

Certain jobs could be filled very quickly if workers were allowed to negotiate their own wages. Minimum wage workers also continue to qualify for many government programs such as food stamps, creating a dilemma for those who don’t want to become reliant on social welfare programs but cannot earn a living wage. Many economists agree with this criticism of the minimum wage law, citing the long-term problems of raising other salaries across the board to compensate for a raise in the minimum wage.

Those who favor the federal and state minimum wage laws claim that workers are protected from exploitation by employers. By establishing a legal minimum wage

for dangerous or physically demanding jobs, laborers can be assured of fair compensation for their efforts. As far as increases in the federal minimum wages are concerned, a rising tide lifts all boats.

Historically, few jobs have been lost due to an increased minimum wage. When other salaries are adjusted upward to compensate, the result is often a stronger economy with higher consumer spending.

The minimum wage has actually become a poverty wage instead of an anti-poverty wage with damaging rippling effects throughout our economy. The minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour since 1997 and buys less today than it did in 1951 according to a report titled “Economic Policy Institute: State of Working America 2004 – 2005.” This increase has been completely eroded by inflation. The figure which amounts to \$10,700 a

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