

BTS COMPTABILITÉ ET GESTION DES ORGANISATIONS

ÉPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS – Session 2016

Sujet 2

The Minimum Wage: Getting to \$15

Democrats are divided on how much to raise the minimum, currently \$7.25 an hour. Hillary Rodham Clinton has spoken favorably of a Democratic bill for a raise to \$12 by 2020. Senator Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley, the former governor of Maryland, as well as several congressional Democrats, support \$15 an hour by 2020. Is \$12 adequate to ensure a minimally decent living? Would \$15 be economically feasible¹?

Fifteen dollars, phased in gradually, is the better option. It would be adequate and feasible, assuming that policy makers also take steps to raise middle-class wages, which would include tough enforcement of updated laws on overtime, scheduling, worker classification and other labor issues.

States should decide Mrs. Fiorina, a Republican candidate, has said that setting a minimum wage should be “a state decision, not a federal decision,” because of differences in the cost of living around the country.

Experience shows that state minimums are inadequate without a robust federal minimum. Today, 21 states do not impose minimums higher than \$7.25, which was already too low when it was mandated by Congress in 2007. None of the other 29 states have minimums high enough to cover local expenses for an individual worker. In New York, including New York City, the minimum will top out at \$9 at the end of this year, even though it takes an hourly wage of \$12.75 for one person to cover living costs in the state.

If there were no federal minimum, states would be free to perpetuate poverty level wages. Under the law in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee, there is no state minimum wage; in Georgia and Wyoming, the state minimums are \$5.15 an hour.

Businesses will be hurt Donald Trump has said a higher minimum wage would make it impossible for American companies to compete with low-paying foreign rivals.

Robots will replace workers Senator Marco Rubio has been trotting out² this scare tactic at every opportunity: “I don't want to deny someone \$10.10. I'm worried about the people whose wages are going to go down to zero because you've made them more expensive than a machine.”

But keeping worker pay low to discourage capital investment is a recipe for a faltering³ economy and ignores history, in which new technology has both replaced and created jobs.

The job of economic leaders is to help ensure not only rising profits but also rising wages at all pay levels. The Democratic candidates get that a robust minimum wage is vital to that challenge. The Republicans do not.

Adapted from *The New York Times*, The Editorial Board, September 4, 2015

1. *Feasible: possible*
2. *Trot out: (here) repeat*
3. *Faltering: uncertain*