

Persuasive Essay

Why should American businesses and politicians consider raising the minimum wage? Some folks like liberal-minded Bernie Sanders exhort businesses out of good conscience to increase their minimums to \$15.00 an hour so that working families can save for necessities like college tuition and health care. Yet others like Donald Trump disparage current wages as too high and as a drain on small businesses. The Los Angeles Times editorial board in "Raise the Minimum Wage" successfully supports the position that the minimum wage should be increased by exploiting the classic persuasion techniques of logos and pathos.

The use of pathos—or emotional suggestiveness and sensitivity—is most pronounced in the opening paragraph, building a sense of pity for the hardworking Californians who cannot make a living wage while working full-time. As the authors argue, "the measure will bring much-needed relief to thousands of Californians struggling to get by" (2). Carefully chosen diction in subsequent paragraphs echoes this sense of pity toward the overworked and underpaid. For example, the authors describe the low earning levels in the state as "dismal" (2). They evoke greater moral outrage in

the next sentence by dubbing the lack of career advancement opportunity in American low-wage jobs as a “travesty” (2). Not timid about playing the emotion card, the authors contend that “sadly” (2), workers well into their twenties--many of them parents with young mouths to feed (nothing piques sympathy like starving kiddoes, eh?)—cannot earn much more cash than a teenager supplementing a threadbare allowance. The writers

also exploit a sense of pride in their home state, indicating that California was “the first to set a minimum wage in 1916, 22 years before the federal government established a national one” (2). This detail may stir the fires within proud Californians, appealing to the “be-a-leader-not-a-follower” mentality that Americans generally attribute to west-coasters, and hopefully motivating them to support what was—much like surfboards and the Beach Boys—another California-borne trend, this one perhaps more humanitarian.

Still, emotion without reason appeals to a limited crowd, so the bulk of the persuasive power in the *Times* piece emerges from its brilliant manipulation of logos (logic-based strategies), chief among them statistics, facts,

research, and the acknowledgement of alternative viewpoints. For the more conservative reader timid about social welfare giveaways that may send the economy into recession, the writers emphasize the gradual, progressive nature of the bill revised by Assemblyman Luis Alejo, indicating that the bottom wage under his legislation would commence at \$9 in 2014 before edging to \$10 in 2016. While Alejo's revision is gradual, the board points out that it is still more aggressive than the original version of the bill, giving hope to liberals while assuaging the fears of conservatives who feel that a minimum wage hike will not act as catnip to the economy. The board also cites the statistic that "six out of ten occupations expected to see the fastest growth" (2) are most likely to benefit from the wage hike, creating a sense of urgency to implement an increase lest a broad swath of the American workforce spiral into

abject poverty. The authors offer historical fact to buoy this urgency, reminding readers that employers in the 1990's engaged in wage competition to attract workers once economic growth arrived, offering superior benefit packages to workers in boom towns (3).

It's common knowledge among Lotharios, advertisers, and demagogues that while the human brain is a logic-driven organ, so much of what we do and say is driven by emotion. Wisely, the Times board capitalized on this knowledge, softening the hearts of its readers in the first half of the editorial with emotion-laden language before appealing to their more reasonable nature with convincing facts and statistics.