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Daily Mail editorial: New prevailing wage rates raise good questions

After months of wrangling and much ink spilled, the state has set new prevailing wage rates for state-funded construction projects.

Are they the “right” rates? Who knows?

But Senate Majority Leader Mitch Carmichael is asking the right question: “Why do we put ourselves through this and twist ourselves into pretzels to determine what the wage rates are?”

The simple answer is that even though they represent a small minority of workers in this state, labor unions still have tremendous influence, especially over certain politicians. And higher-than-market, government-mandated wages are what unions want.

But Carmichael’s question strikes at a deeper truth. Why don’t we have a state Grocery Board to set the “prevailing price” for milk and bread? Or a Media Board to tell you what you must pay for this newspaper?

Why are the overwhelming majority of salaries and wages for workers in this state are determined by the free market?

Because the free market — not a panel of government bureaucrats susceptible to all kinds of political pressure — is the fairest, most reliable way to determine prices for goods and labor.

MetroNews’ Hoppy Kercheval asks another good question: “(W)ho is representing the taxpayers in this scenario? Government’s responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars trumps the politically-driven desire to use those limited resources to subsidize labor wages above market rates.”

The same working people The Left claims to champion are also taxpayers. And taxpayers deserve to have their money spent as economically as possible, not given away to politically connected interests under the veneer of what is at best a pseudo-scientific process.

“I’m led now, more than ever, to believe the best determinant of a proper wage rate is the free market,” said Carmichael.

He’s right. The Legislature should vote next year to end the prevailing wage system entirely rather than continue to participate in this charade.