

Minimum-wage hike gains momentum

By Kristena Hansen
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — The minimum-wage debate gained momentum at the Legislature on Friday when a handful of senators narrowly favored a newly proposed bill to raise wages in a three-tiered approach aimed at pleasing urban and rural areas.

Although nothing is set in stone just yet, Friday's decision was the first step forward on an issue that grew more contentious as the week progressed, rife with fiery exchanges between unions, businesses, local governments and partisan lawmakers that antagonized efforts to lock down a compromise at the Legislature in lieu of more aggressive proposals for the November ballot.

The three-tiered proposal, now up for vote on the Senate floor, was introduced just the day prior in a surprise move by Senate Democrats. It is similar yet separate from Gov. Kate Brown's two-tiered approach she had negotiated with various stakeholders before the legislative session began on Monday.

Although Brown's proposal, or any other for that matter, isn't off the table just yet, Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, said the three-tiered system better caters to the unique needs of Oregon's farmland-laden counties to the east while still addressing the soaring living costs in metro Portland up north.

"The easiest thing us legislators could do would be to just let this go to the ballot ... I think we all know the legislative solution, a legislative route, is the better route," Dembrow said after casting his vote in

favor of the proposal during Friday's Senate Committee on Workforce and General Government hearing. "There will certainly be individual impacts of this rise. But overall it will not have a negative effect on the economy."

The proposal would raise the state's current \$9.25-an-hour minimum by 50 cents in metro Portland and a group of counties that include Salem and Eugene starting in July, while the third category of rural counties would see a 25-cent increase. Gradual increases thereafter would take place annually through 2022, when Portland's rate would be set at \$14.75 an hour, other urban counties at \$13.50 and rural counties at \$12.50.

The committee's two Republicans, Sens. Kim Thatcher and Tim Knopp, voted against the measure, echoing testimonies earlier this week from rural farmers and small-business owners about the hardship a wage increase would impose.

"I really feel like the impact on this is going to be negative in a lot of ways. It's going to hurt a lot of the people you're trying to help," Knopp said. "I think there are better ways to impact the working poor."

Outside of the Legislature, meanwhile, groups with competing agendas are ramping up their campaigns.

Union groups behind the ballot proposals vowed to double their signature-gathering efforts while two coalitions backed by such groups as the Oregon Farm Bureau and the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce have been gathering support through newly launched websites attacking the minimum-wage effort.

Federal wolf-killing program faces lawsuit

SALEM (AP) — Conservationists filed a federal lawsuit in Oregon on Wednesday that challenges the authority of a federal government program to kill wolves in the state.

The lawsuit targets the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program, which controls the number of wolves, coyotes, grizzly bears, mountain lions and other wild animals.

It's a similar lawsuit

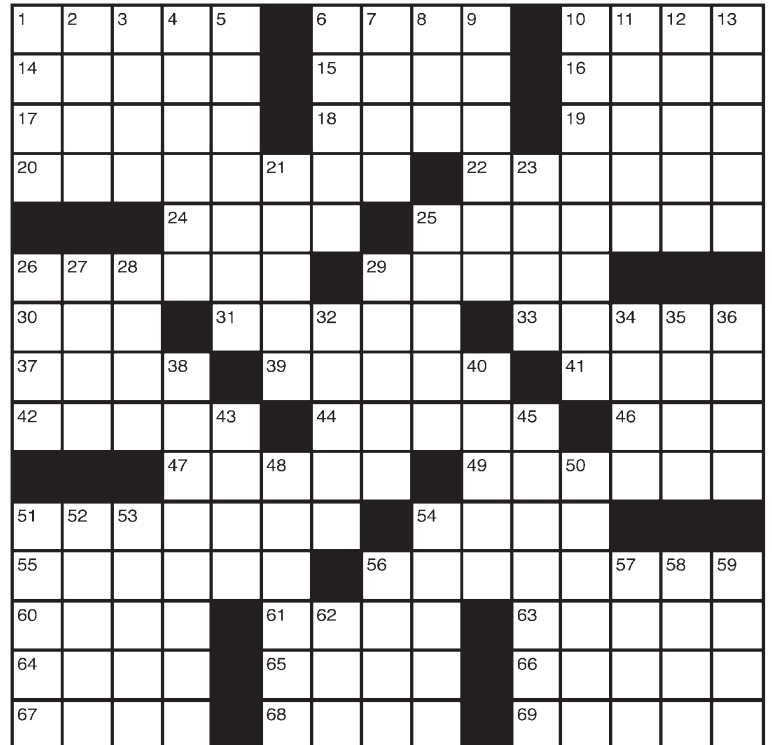
Cascadia Wildlands in Eugene and other conservationists won late last year in Washington state, where a federal judge said the program should've done a more thorough analysis of the effects of its activities and banned it from killing wolves in that state.

Cascadia Wildlands is the same group currently fighting Oregon's decision last year to remove the wolf from the state's endangered species list in a separate lawsuit.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Metal clothing fasteners
 - 6 Mineral springs
 - 10 Church service
 - 14 Bereaved wife
 - 15 Part of the foot
 - 16 Qualified
 - 17 Agassi of tennis
 - 18 Cast a ballot
 - 19 Cut of pork
 - 20 Badgered
 - 22 Rich
 - 24 Limited
 - 25 Athletes
 - 26 Actor ___ Dafoe
 - 29 Takes a nap
 - 30 "___ you kidding me?"
 - 31 Passenger
 - 33 2006 American Idol
 - 37 Will and Harry, to Charles
 - 39 Stretch of land
 - 41 Mom's sister
 - 42 Those opposed
 - 44 Plant pest
 - 46 Maui garland
 - 47 Soft-furred weasel cousins
 - 49 Not so sick anymore
 - 51 One embraced by a new family
 - 54 Credit card
 - 55 Winchesters & Springfield
 - 56 Doable
 - 60 Bit of info on an invitation
 - 61 Yarn
 - 63 Actress Burstyn
 - 64 On ___ own; independent
 - 65 Fib teller
 - 66 Circular
 - 67 Carry on
 - 68 BPOE members
 - 69 Lock of hair



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 2/10/16

- DOWN**
- 1 Exchange
 - 2 Reasonable bedtime
 - 3 Also says
 - 4 Door; entrance
 - 5 Broom user
 - 6 Rescued
 - 7 Nudge
 - 8 ___ up; misbehave
 - 9 Beach sand souvenirs
 - 10 Kuala Lumpur's location
 - 11 Dwelling
 - 12 Craftier
 - 13 Transmits
 - 21 Send in payment
 - 23 Sworn statement
 - 25 Freshwater fish
 - 26 "Jeremiah ___ bullfrog..."
 - 27 Clothes presser's need
 - 28 Loaned
 - 29 Gathers crops
 - 32 Male duck
 - 34 Kind of film
 - 35 Patella's place
 - 36 Mix in a bowl
 - 38 Easiest
 - 40 Leg bone

- 43 Web surfer's stop
- 45 Dinner course
- 48 ___ Crunch; chocolate bar
- 50 Clothes maker
- 51 Zeal
- 52 Leader of the Supremes
- 53 Frequently
- 54 Swerves
- 56 ___ jacket; bulletproof vest
- 57 Sapphire color
- 58 Camera's eye
- 59 Concludes
- 62 Have a bug

— Last Week's Puzzle Solved —



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