

Look twice at raise

The Oregon Legislature is considering legislation which, if passed, will increase by about eight per cent the pay of all public employees. Included in the pay raises are high-ranking elected public officials such as the governor and the secretary-of-state. But by percentage, the largest proposed pay raise of them all goes to the Oregon legislators themselves.

At first glance, any proposal to raise the pay for legislators may appear to be a self-serving proposition put forward by a hawk-eyed politician more concerned about his or her own aims than the public good.

There may be an element of that in the proposed 35 per cent pay raise for legislators over two years included in the total pay raise proposal. But in general, there are a lot of reasons to say yes to a pay hike of that kind.

Probably the most important reason is that if it passes you or I may be able to afford to run for the Legislature next session. Legislators don't earn much now, somewhere around \$11,000 over the biennium plus per diem payments and expense accounts. But the average citizen may not be able to abandon a moderately well-paying job to work for less money at the Legislature.

Another blockade for moderate and low income folks who have a desire to enter the Legislature is that they may have a hard time getting back into their jobs when the session ends. The aspiring candidate may have to quit his or her job to clear the way for time at the Legislature.

What all this adds up to is a preference for legislators who are independently wealthy; those who can afford to leave their jobs for six months every other year.

Oregon is proud of its tradition of a citizen legislature, one where everybody has an opportunity to serve what they see as the public interest. Legislative pay raises, as long as they don't go through the ceiling, won't work against the citizen legislature concept. Pay raises, in fact, will work toward getting a more representative cross-section of the population in the Legislature, which means a larger variety of interests will be served.

But another aspect of the pay raise is that the legislators are voting for a raise which will become effective immediately. At the same time, legislation which would require pay raises approved by the Legislature to become effective only after the current term of office is dying a slow death in committee.

Failure to pass this legislation indicates that the legislators are voting to increase their own wages, a situation which should never be allowed to exist. Under that system, the opportunities for a legislator to vote merely to line his or her own pocket, rather than to judge the issue on its merits, is too great a temptation. If pay raises were delayed until the next session, legislators would be more able to look at the proposal objectively.

The pay raise proposed by the Legislature this session should be passed. Future pay raises should be closely examined and passed only if necessary to allow middle and low-income people to enter the legislative process. At the same time, the Legislature should recognize the need and common sense of approving legislation which will make the pay raises effective only after the current term of office.



State blind to Title IX

Last week the Oregon Legislature let die a bill that would have provided almost \$1 million in state funds for women's intercollegiate sports at the state's three major universities. That was a mistake.

The bill, when living, was in response to the federal government mandate that universities must provide equal athletic opportunity to women, a rule commonly known as Title IX. Unfortunately, the government did not provide any funds to carry out this requirement, thereby shifting the responsibility to the individual states.

Now our state legislature decides, in the words of Rep. Vera Katz, D-Portland, that it has more important things to spend its money on. I don't know what could be more important than helping to carry out a federal law.

The manner in which the bill was disposed is another cause for concern. Katz, chairer of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, killed the bill by not assigning it to a sub-committee. That means it was never formally discussed by the legislators, it was never open to comments from the public and, in sum, never considered seriously. Katz simply used her good judgement, and I use the term loosely, to stifle the bill before it even had a chance.

She said last week that the schools needed to justify their need for the money by detailing what happens to funds now collected in television revenue, alumni contributions and other sources. Chances are, if she had assigned the bill to a sub-committee, University Athletic Director John Caine and others would have provided answers to this and other questions at a public hearing of the sub-committee. She never gave it the chance.

Killing a bill by not assigning it happens more than in just this one instance, but when the bill is concerned with complying with federal law, it becomes a much more important issue, indeed.

An ironic aspect of the issue is brought up by Rep. Roger Martin, R-Lake Oswego, the House minority leader and the major force behind the legislation. "My point is that here is the Oregon Legislature," he says, "which twice has firmly endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment, but is not willing to back up its vote with money to help out women's sports." Amen.

I'll be the first to admit that athletics has an inordinate amount of influence at the University. Athletes get scholarships and other considerations because they can shoot a basketball, kick a football or jump seven feet in the air. They also often get these scholarships

when they don't really need one; that is, they could afford to pay their tuition if the University didn't pay it for them.

The purpose of a university is to provide education, so the money for athletics possibly could be better spent. Unfortunately, athletics also brings in much more needed money to the University than do successful students. Alumni and community contributions come to the University, and not just the Athletic Department, largely because of the image created by successful sports programs, not because of world-renowned professors or A students. Attempts to alter the public's contribution priorities would prove futile.

"You've got to spend money to make money" is an oft-heard phrase in the business world, and it applies to the situation of the athletic department. If the department is to keep bringing in the money it needs to support itself — money from television revenue, alumni contributions and football and basketball receipts — it needs to spend money to have successful programs which create the image attractive to the contributors. Alumni and televisions don't flock as readily to a loser.

And if the Athletic Department is expected to support women's programs as well, as the federal government says they must, it's plain and simple that more money is needed.

It's unfortunate that to free up the necessary funds to comply with the law we face the possibility of cutting minor sports. State money would reduce that chance.

Caine is rightfully upset. "What the federal government assumes," he says, "is that since the states are constitutionally responsible for appropriating funds to implement federal laws, they (the states) will provide the support. In this case, they didn't."

The Athletic Department cannot take money out of its normal operating budget to support a women's program without hurting minor sports. There just isn't enough money to go around. With the refusal of the state to provide funds to comply with Title IX, Caine isn't sure what they can do. He says he could ask for more alumni and community support. But whatever they do, he's doubtful they can come up with funds equal to the nearly \$1 million the bill would have provided.

Action like this in the Legislature is irresponsible at best, and Katz in particular made a poor decision in killing this bill. To not make funds available for complying with federal law is unforgivable.

