

# Wage bill would give yearly raise

■ State Rep. Bill Morrisette wants minimum wage increases tied to inflation

By Rebecca Newell  
Oregon Daily Emerald

During college, every quarter, nickel and dime counts for students. If state Rep. Bill Morrisette, D-Springfield, succeeds in passing a bill that ties minimum wage to inflation, it will mean more precious cash for working students.

While inflation drove up prices during the past two years, minimum wage in Oregon hasn't gone up in response. If Morrisette's bill passes, the state Labor Commissioner would adjust the minimum wage every year in September based on changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Oregon. New wages would go into effect every January.

"If we don't index minimum wage [with the CPI], we're going to fall behind," Morrisette said. "My philosophy is that it is good business to pay people enough to participate in the economy."

Because the last minimum wage increase was in 1999, the bill asks for the Labor Commissioner to base next September's calculations on the CPI increase since Jan. 1, 1999. Inflation since then has risen approximately 6 percent, which would result in minimum wage being set at \$6.87. If the CPI continues to increase annually at about 3 percent, the minimum wage would continue to increase 20 to 25 cents annually.

"If people had a family wage job — \$17 an hour for a four-person family — they would be paying taxes back into the system," Morrisette said. "The reason businesses can say we don't need to raise minimum wage is that they know the government has assistance programs and can step in."

If the bill passes, the increase would mainly benefit minimum-wage employees, but it could also push up the wages of other workers.

At the University level, the increase would affect salaries of students with work-study positions

## House Bill 2786

The bill would tie the Oregon minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index. Under the bill, the state Labor Commissioner would adjust the minimum wage based upon the U.S. City Average CPI for all urban areas. The wage adjustment would go into effect each January.

Because there has been no minimum wage increase since Jan. 1, 1999, the bill calls for the Labor Commissioner to base next September's calculation on the CPI increase since Jan. 1, 1999, which would put minimum wage at \$6.87.

SOURCE: State Rep. Bill Morrisette

and could also have an effect on classified staff.

"The last increase in minimum wage pushed up the bottom of [salaries for] the classified staff, which is currently at \$7.15 an hour," said Christine Lonigan, University human resources employment manager. "It would cost the University more with the increase."

Though the increase could result in more money for individual students, it could also reduce the number of jobs, depending on how departments absorb the increase, Lonigan said.

But some students say that every increase would help when living on an already tight budget.

"At the University, they don't let you work more than 20 hours a week and you can't live off of that," said junior Clara Barnes, a political science and economics major who works at the Buzz Coffeehouse. "[The increase] would help a lot because minimum wage isn't very much."

The bill is currently facing a committee hearing in the state House of Representatives. If it makes it to the floor, there is a good chance of it passing, Morrisette said.

"We're asking for something relatively small and simple," Morrisette said. "It's something we have to keep working on, even if we're not sure it's going to succeed."

# Voter registration pressed in Oregon

SALEM — Secretary of State Bill Bradbury says a centralized voter registration system would help restore confidence in the Oregon ballot after the entire election system was tarnished nationwide by the recent Florida presidential race fiasco.

Bradbury testified Wednesday before a House committee on a bill that would direct his office to develop and implement a centralized system for Oregon.

"Clearly there are significant issues with the perception of problems with the electoral system," Bradbury said.

The House Rules, Redistricting and Public Affairs Committee postponed action on the bill, pending a few technical amendments.

The centralized system would create a database that would allow county clerks to see if a voter has registered in more than one county, a concern that cropped up when Oregon became the only state in the nation to conduct its elections entirely by mail.

"In light of Florida, it is essential

that we elected officials do everything in our power to fully restore the public trust in our electoral system," Bradbury said.

With a centralized voter-registration scheme, Bradbury added, the state would also be able to reduce the chance that someone might vote twice. It also would improve the accuracy of its information on voters, he said.

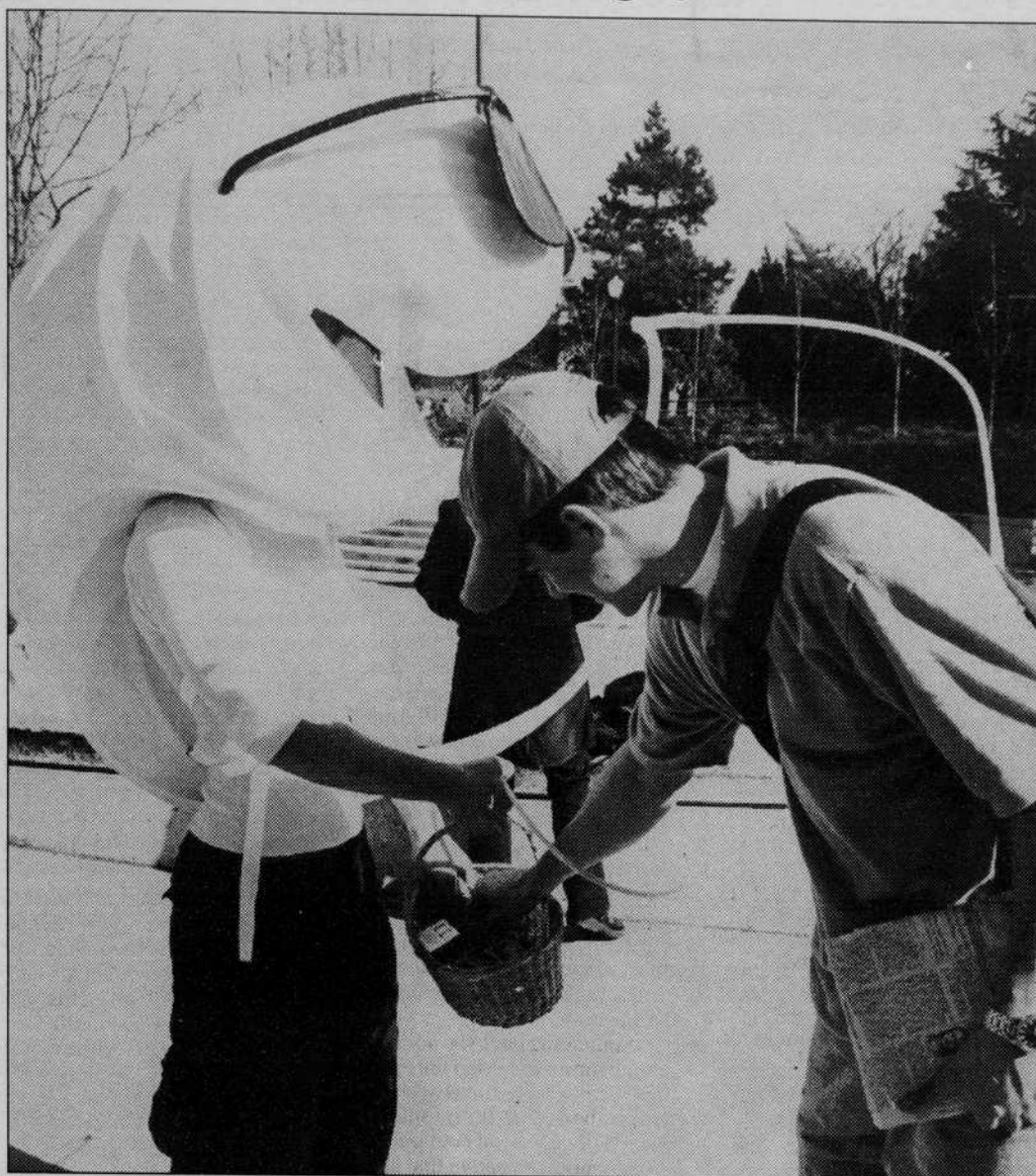
The issue came before the Legislature even before the recent presidential election placed elections procedures under public scrutiny. In 1999, both the House and Senate passed the same proposal, but the project floundered because of a lack of funding.

Glenn Newkirk, president of InfoSentry Services, was hired last session to advise the secretary of state's office on the establishment of a statewide voter registration system and warned then that something like Florida's nightmare could happen.

"I told you so," Newkirk said.

Associated Press

## Not your average Joe



Adam Amato Emerald

Nothing says love like a six-foot Joe Sperm and an equally tall condom to match. Members of College Democrats and Students For Choice sponsored a table in the EMU Amphitheater offering free condoms and other birth control to celebrate Valentine's Day and National Condom Day. Students For Choice co-director Sara Poynter said the event was specifically planned for Valentine's Day, and the national holiday to increase birth control awareness just happened to fall on the same day.

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