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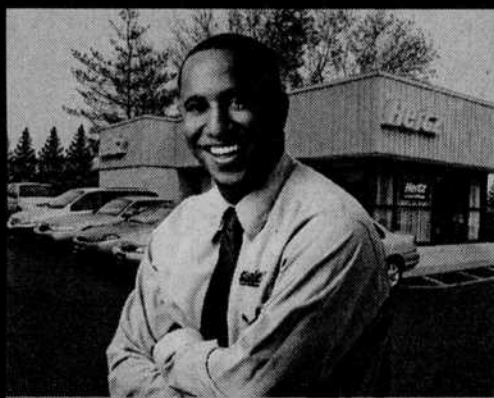
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**Wait staffs battle
minimum wage
freeze in Oregon**

BY NIKI SULLIVAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — Restaurant owners and their wait staffs squared off over whether restaurant owners should be allowed to freeze minimum wage for servers who earn a portion of their salary in tips.

Oregonians in 2002 passed a measure to raise the minimum wage and require that it be revised annually in line with price index changes.

But under a restaurant industry-backed bill heard Monday, the minimum wage would be kept at \$7.25 per hour for workers who earn \$30 or more per month in tips.

Restaurant owners argued in a public hearing that the bill would make wages more fair for cooks and other restaurant employees who do not earn tips.

But union groups and employees said the bill undermines voter-approved minimum wage laws, which guarantee inflation increases for minimum wage.

Bill Perry of the Oregon Restaurant Association said the bill wouldn't decrease wages for servers, but hold the minimum wage rate steady, which would allow restaurants to pay untipped employees more.

"(This) will not make servers make less money," said Perry said. "There's nothing that moves these

people backwards."

Perry said servers currently make an average of \$17 per hour including tips and that Oregon is one of only seven states without a so-called tip credit.

"We're not saying that the servers don't deserve their tip income," Perry said. "The question is, how do we get a fair wage to the back of the house employees."

The group has also argued in the past that automatic increases hurt the restaurant industry.

But Dee Ette Peck, a waitress and divorced mother of two, told the House Business Labor and Consumer Affairs Committee that she struggles to cover the bills for her family, even with tips.

"I count on my paycheck every two weeks" to pay the bills, she said, adding that she can't rely on unpredictable tip levels.

Peck said if the bill were to pass, she might have to get a second job to provide for her family.

"No one is getting rich on minimum wage," said Tim Nesbitt, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. Nesbitt said the AFL-CIO estimates that servers earn closer to \$10 per hour when tips are factored in.

Nesbitt said that when servers make more, cooks make more, and said if the bill would have passed last session, all restaurant staff would now make less money.

IN BRIEF**University supporters join
legislative rally in Salem**

Members of the University community will rally behind the University's 2005 legislative priorities in Salem on Wednesday as part of "UO Day at the Capitol."

Michael Redding, associate vice president of public and government affairs, said the event will begin around noon in the Capitol Galleria, when University supporters will set up displays showcasing some key issues including the Oregon Nanoscience and Microtechnologies Institute and the proposed construction for the College of Education.

At 4 p.m. the University Alumni Association will host a reception for legislators.

In addition, ASUO President Adam Petkun will be invoking the floor session for the Oregon House of Representatives at a time to-be-announced. On Monday, the session began at 10:30 a.m.

Petkun said the ASUO typically doesn't participate in the University's lobby day, but many of the University's and ASUO's legislative priorities coincide.

All University supporters are invited to volunteer. Interested individuals can call Tim Black, advocacy director of public and government affairs, for more information at 346-5023.

—Adam Cherry

**Oregon legislator's idea:
no money for colleges**

SALEM — An Oregon legislator, convinced that the state's colleges aren't spending budgets wisely, has come up with a rather drastic proposal: no more money.

Rep. Bob Ackerman, a Democrat representing Eugene's House District 13, has sponsored House Bill 2957, which would bar the state's colleges from raising fees for nearly every-

thing from tuition to textbooks.

Ackerman, who served on the Lane Community College board for 12 years, doesn't expect the bill will fly.

"But I think it's a discussion point, a starting point. It's something for people to look at and get an idea what the Legislature could do if it had to. You've got to start somewhere," he said.

Tuition at the state's seven four-year universities — with the Legislature's approval — has increased by an average 46 percent since 1999 and by 64 percent at 17 two-year colleges.

Annual state funding for universities is \$50 million less this year than it was at the start of the 2001-03 biennium. Universities also have 10,000 more students than they did in 2000.

"Since we've already reduced expenditures, (the bill) would put us in a real bind in being able to maintain the quality of programs or ... pay the debt service on the buildings that we've built," said George Pernsteiner, interim chancellor of the Oregon University System. "It's a bill that would create a lot of difficulties for us if it were enacted."

Cam Preus-Braly, the state commissioner for community colleges, said two-year schools already have had to cut hundreds of class sections because of budget cuts — in spite of tuition increases.

She said if the state can't provide the funds and the colleges can't raise any, the only choice will be even fewer classes and fewer students.

"The revenue has to come from somewhere," she said.

While Ackerman hasn't analyzed college budgets to know where the savings are, he remains convinced that they exist.

"I think they need to rein in their spending; I'm not sure they're using all the efficiencies they possibly could," he said. "I think that there's money there, but it takes aggressive boards to go after the administrations to uncover these funds. I don't see that happening."

—The Associated Press

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