

UC Commissioner Steve McClure's bear-like approach



LOOK TOWARD LEGISLATION
SEN. BILL HANSELL

I want to take this opportunity to share a few thoughts about an Elgin farm boy, who has faithfully served the people of Union County for 28 years, and not only Union County, but those of us in surrounding counties, the state of Oregon, and nationally, as well. I'm speaking of my good friend, Commissioner Steve McClure. One of the advantages of writing an Op-Ed piece is you don't have to get permission to express your views about someone else.

Steve does not like to toot his own horn, and I know he would not have given me permission to write this column about him.

If I were to compare Steve to an animal it would be some kind of bear. When it came to issues affecting Union County, he was a grizzly bear.

Not only is Steve the size of a grizzly, but he

possessed a bit of a grizzly temperament. You didn't want to mess with him on issues. He was tenacious, didn't give up, and fought hard.

When it came to forest issues no one was better prepared or better educated than Grizzly Steve. I know before we in Umatilla County made any policy decisions on forest issues, we checked with Steve on what his position was and why. Not one time did he ever lead us astray.

He was also a polar bear. Polar bears travel long distances in winter conditions. The year Steve served as President of the Association of Oregon Counties, he traveled over 600 miles round trip many times in all sorts of inclement weather, especially over the Blues, and through the Gorge. I could be wrong, but I don't think



he ever spent a night in Salem. When the meeting was over he headed back to La Grande no matter what time of day or night. If he had meetings the next day, he would not miss them. His dedication and stamina were very polar bear like.

He is also a teddy bear. Steve has a heart of gold. How many fathers would take personal vacation time to ride the Whitman College woman's basketball team bus to away games. I know Steve did, because his daughter Jennifer was a star player

for the team. I doubt anyone will ever know the extent of the many acts of kindness Steve has done — without any fanfare — through the years. Steve has a kind heart and his kindness has been received by many.

Steve was like a momma bear. He protected people, policy and programs that were and are important to him. If he didn't think Union County got its fair share, he was on the phone with me wanting to know why. If there was something Union County needed, he

was on the phone letting me know. He was not going to let those Valley Idiots ruin opportunities for his county.

Part of the reason bears are at the top of the food chain is their intelligence. They problem solve and figure things out. My nephew had a bear open his car door, and go through the car finding food, while parked at a friend's house near Lake Tahoe. Ever try to open a bear proof garbage can? Bears are intelligent, and figure things out. My friend Steve was a master

at figuring things out and finding solutions.

Part of that intelligence is knowing when the time to retire has come. Thank you, Steve, for your service, your bear-like presence, and your friendship. You will be missed.

Senator Bill Hansell served for 30 years as an Umatilla County Commissioner. For 22 of those years, he and Commissioner Steve McClure served and worked together in their respective counties. Senator Hansell, when he retired from being a County Commissioner, took office as a State Senator. Commissioner McClure is much smarter, and will stay in retirement in the County he loves.

Your views

Hiatt: Raising the minimum wage is a good idea

I applaud Stephen Prince for his column about the minimum wage in the August 29 Opinion page.

It's generally agreed that the federal minimum wage had its greatest purchasing power in 1968 when it was \$1.60 per hour, equivalent to almost \$12 per hour in 2018 inflation-adjusted dollars.

If the minimum wage had kept pace with both inflation and increases in worker productivity since 1968, it would be over \$19 per hour now.

Raising the minimum wage doesn't benefit only government at all levels by increasing tax revenues and reducing expenditures for social programs, as Prince mentions, it starts a cycle of rising prosperity that benefits everyone in society; it certainly benefits the workers themselves, but additional purchasing power in the pockets of the poorest Americans also benefits businesses who see an expanded base of customers able to purchase

their goods and services. Henry Ford realized this a century ago, when he was setting up his first automobile assembly lines: it would be good for business in general, and for the Ford Motor Company in particular, if he paid his assembly-line workers enough that they could actually afford to purchase one of the vehicles they were manufacturing.

Another worthy result of raising the federal minimum wage is that doing so would level the playing field across the nation, making it easier for farmers and business owners in relatively high-wage states like Oregon to compete with their counterparts in lower-wage states like Idaho.

For this reason alone, Oregon's entire congressional delegation (I'm looking at you, Greg Walden) should support a federal minimum wage increase to at least \$15 per hour, with continuing annual adjustments for inflation.

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