

**GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD**  
**Another raise for legislators unlikely**

A couple of quick notes about items that have recently attracted attention in the Oregon Legislature:

First, Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick is exactly right about the reasons why legislators should consider a pay increase for themselves. But there's a problem: The money to do that isn't available, unless someone finds a couple of million stashed away in the back of somebody's desk — and, even then, the unexpected windfall likely would be better spent to shore up other areas in need of cash.

With that said, it would be a mistake to simply dismiss Burdick's concerns, but this will not be the session in which legislators vote themselves a pay raise.

Burdick's argument is the relatively low pay legislators receive doesn't amount to a living wage, and limits the type of people who can serve. The result is a Legislature filled with retirees or independently wealthy representatives — or, people who have enough flexibility in their workplaces that they can afford to essentially take six months off every few years.

"We're a diverse state, we need a diverse Legislature," Burdick told Oregon Public Broadcasting. "Because of the low pay, we are automatically screening out people who really should be represented here."

Legislators now make \$31,200, plus an extra \$149 a day when the Legislature is in session. This amounts to a full-time job, even if we like to think otherwise. And, as Burdick points out, many county and city officials in Oregon make considerably more money.

Still, Burdick's proposal, to boost legislative pay by 63 percent to more than \$60,000 a year, isn't likely to get much traction, coming as it does in the middle of a session where legislative budget writers have asked almost every part of state government to prepare for cutbacks. That \$60,000 would make Oregon legislators among the best-paid in the nation for this type of legislative assembly, which just adds to the difficulties facing the proposal.

In addition, the "optics" (as political insiders like to say) are simply horrible, considering that the proposal is coming just a few weeks after a 28 percent legislative pay raise went into effect. Now, to be fair, legislators didn't initiate that pay increase, which was tied to collective bargaining agreements that affected nearly 40,000 state employees. Still, it's not entirely clear where the state will find the estimated \$1.6 million every two years to cover the tab for that increase.

Oregon residents pride themselves on having a citizen Legislature — but the fact is our assembly doesn't reflect the state's population. It's not a bad idea to think about ways to encourage a more diverse Legislature, as long as we understand some of those ideas will come with a price tag the state is ill-equipped to pay.

Here's the other item that caught our eye: We were fascinated to read of Sen. Fred Girod's efforts to pass a measure, Senate Concurrent Resolution 12, which asks the Legislature to commemorate and express regret for a particularly painful bit of Oregon history: The Modoc War of 1872-73, during which about 50 Modoc Indians fended off a thousand U.S. Army soldiers in a remote area near the California border. The battle that ended the standoff, the Battle of Dry Lake in May 1873, was a decisive defeat for the Modocs. Four eventually were executed for war crimes. Remaining members of the tribe were herded into rail cars and sent as prisoners of war to Oklahoma, then known as Indian Territory.

Girod, a Republican from Stayton who represents a district that includes part of Linn County, said a 2011 documentary on Oregon Public Broadcasting opened his eyes to this history. He's hoping the resolution, which was approved this week by a Senate committee, will open more eyes across the state. It's a worthy goal, and a worthwhile piece of legislation from the senator.



## What grows an economy? Confidence!

This is my fifth year in the Legislature. Over the past three years, we have seen major changes in policy affecting Oregonians' livelihoods and cost of living. This year, much of the legislation is aimed at those who employ others. Based on conversations with business owners, confidence in Oregon is at an all-time low.

Why do people make investments? Because they have confidence the odds of getting a return on an investment will be profitable. Why do people purchase a certain brand rather than another? Confidence based either on their own experience or from the recommendations of people they trust. Why do entrepreneurs take risks? Confidence their idea, market research, workable plan, salable product and the willingness to commit themselves to hard work in their investment is a calculated risk they are willing to take.

President Obama ran on a mantra of hope and change. He got elected but could not develop a confidence in the business world that would grow the economy past a meager couple of percentage points. After eight years of little growth and little wealth, we elected a president who ran on growing business, conservative values, retrieving a middle class and returning to greatness. He was

elected and our economy has exploded. Why? In one word: confidence that regulations would be reduced, taxes would be decreased, and unemployment would be all but eliminated.

The U.S. economy is good, and people have confidence that, if they invest well, they will receive a good return on their investment. But the changes being introduced in the Oregon Legislature this year have Oregon's business community concerned. From the agricultural community, real estate, manufacturers, construction and retail, all have concerns about these proposed policies. Rent control has already brought about the opposite effect they thought it would. Rents increased, people were evicted, and properties sold before the legislation could be signed.

We live in a state where the growing majority of job creators lack confidence that Oregon will provide a good future for their business. Many of these people have poured their life and their life's investment into their Oregon business. This year in the Legislature, more than any other year, I see ideology trumping economic policy from folks who don't understand small business. They don't know what it takes to employ people, what it takes to compete in a worldwide



### My Voice ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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market. They don't understand that most in agriculture can't raise their prices to accommodate increased costs of doing business. They don't understand that it is extremely difficult and costly for small businesses to afford health insurance for themselves and their employees, and they don't see how raising the cost of living affects the ability of employees to hire more workers.

Over the last three years, we have seen rises in minimum wage, paid sick leave, predictable scheduling, limits on hours worked in a week, pay equity and other bureaucratic mandates. This year we already have rent control that has passed and a bill where businesses that provide health care for employees will be taxed on those health care premiums. We have bills regarding cap and trade that will raise everyone's energy costs, bills that place limits on home mortgage deductions, raise SAIF costs, and require paid

family leave.

Unfortunately, these will seem small compared to the upcoming tax reform that will raise corporate taxes \$2 to \$4 billion dollars per biennium. When passed on to the people of Oregon, which it will be, you would take \$4 billion divided by 4.2 million people, which equals \$950 per person or \$3,810 in taxes every two years for a family of four. Is Oregon getting more expensive? You can watch the needle rise.

In a Legislature ruled by a supermajority of Democrats in both chambers as well as the governor's office, Republican legislators have little effect. But the voice of the people is what makes a difference.

There's not a better time to get engaged if you care about Oregon's future and how it affects you and your family.

For information on bills, committees, legislators, phone numbers and email addresses, go to [olis.leg.state.or.us](http://olis.leg.state.or.us).

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**THE OBSERVER**  
An independent newspaper founded in 1896  
(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by Western Communications Inc., 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

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**POSTMASTER**  
Send address changes to:  
The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850  
Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850

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