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# Opinion

## Editorial Board

**Publisher**  
Mike O'Brien  
opinions@capitalpress.com

**Editor**  
Joe Beach  
Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

**Managing Editor**  
Carl Sampson

## OUR VIEW

# We need a nuanced wage solution from Salem

When the Oregon Legislature convenes a 2016 short session, lawmakers will confront various proposals to raise the minimum wage. And voters next November could confront multiple minimum wage increase ballot measures.

The reality of the Legislature's coming minimum wage discussion carries at least two elements. Thanks to a 2002 ballot initiative, Oregon has a minimum wage that is the second highest in

the nation. It is indexed to rise with inflation. Secondly, any discussion of abruptly hiking the minimum wage to \$13.50 or \$15 must reckon with Oregon's two economies: that in Portland and that in the rest of the state.

Last week's issue of *Willamette Week* reported that Senate President Peter Courtney is leery of a one-size-fits-all approach to a major minimum wage hike. Courtney recognizes there is a gulf between Portland's economy,

which is one of the hottest in the nation, and the rest of Oregon, much of which has not recovered from the Great Recession. "If we increase the wage, I want to see a minimum wage that has a floor—less than \$13.50," said Courtney. "Portland should be allowed to go big time, but I can't have a very big minimum across the state. It'll just crush smaller communities."

Sen. Courtney's skepticism is well founded. While many Portland employers would have

little or no difficulty handling a large wage hike, such a boost would push many small and mid-sized businesses in smaller economies to the margin of survival and perhaps failure.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson recently led legislators on a trip around Oregon. She says: "From Ontario to Roseburg to Astoria, I've talked to people who say \$15 is crippling. I don't think we have anticipated all of the unforeseen consequences. I am still absorbing

information."

Gov. Kate Brown's press aide Kristen Grainger says: "The main point she's trying to make is she wants to make sure that it meets the needs of rural Oregon and small businesses and in Portland. She has been careful to stay away from a dollar amount."

A nuanced solution from the Legislature would be a good thing. That would give Oregonians a landmark in the ballot initiative campaigns we can expect.



Rik Dalvit/For the Capital Press

## OUR VIEW

# Wolf decision based on facts, not fears

Wolves are thriving across the West. In Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon they are becoming a fixture on the landscape. A wolf pack has even turned up in Northern California.

In that context, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission made a solid decision last week to take wolves off the state's endangered species list.

Four breeding pairs have been in Eastern Oregon for three consecutive years, as is required in the state wolf plan. Actually, the number of breeding pairs is nine, signaling that the population is far healthier than the wolf plan requires.

Add that to the fact that a minimum of 82 wolves are known to live in Eastern and Southwestern Oregon and there is little reason to worry about wolves disappearing. Their numbers have increased from 14 in 2009 to 82 this year.

And remember: Those are minimum numbers that wildlife managers have confirmed. The actual population may be far larger.

The criteria for delisting the wolf in Oregon were in the state's wolf

management plan, which was the product of prolonged and public debate when it was written.

Now that wolves have met those criteria for delisting, some folks are looking for loopholes to back out of the plan.

They are way out of line.

First, wolves in the western two-thirds of the state remain protected just as they have been all along.

Only in the eastern one-third of the state, where all but seven of the wolves live, are they affected at all, by allowing wildlife managers more flexibility.

Second, Oregon ranchers, who have been most affected by the return of wolves, have lived up to their part of the deal. They've done it in the face of a predator that as of the first of the year had killed 114 cattle, sheep and herding dogs and injured many more.

That is only the number of killings that wildlife managers confirmed. Last year, for example, 34 depredation investigations resulted in only 11 confirmed wolf kills.

Though ranchers are indemnified for their livestock, it doesn't repay them for the weight their other cattle lost because

of wolves or the extra hours and effort required to protect against wolf attacks.

Third, the Endangered Species Act was aimed at protecting plants and animals that were in danger of extinction. Wolves do not fit in that category. They are robust predators that follow the food and do not need special treatment.

In fact, wolves were never reintroduced in Oregon or Washington state; they spilled over from Idaho and British Columbia, where the estimated wolf population is 10,000. More than 50,000 wolves live in Canada and 30,000 live in Alaska.

It defies logic to argue that the wolf is on the brink of extinction.

Yet earnest groups of activists insist that, somehow, wolves are getting short shrift in Oregon. Some are saying the state's biologists didn't jump through an adequate number of hoops before recommending that wolves be delisted. They say they might sue.

If they do, we'll know their concern isn't for wolves, which are continuing to thrive and multiply despite all of the fearful predictions activists have made over the years.

## Readers' views

### Grazing promise has been made before

I attended the 29 October meeting at Adrian, Ore., where the proposed national monument of some 2.5 million acres was discussed. It's not the first time government officials and environmentalists have brought us greetings.

Cecil Dick, spokesman for the Burns Paiute Tribe cautioned, "Beware! My people know well consequences of getting involved with those who come with proposals and promises."

I recall the time Oregon's Sen. Mark Hatfield met with us in Jordan Valley. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association conducted the meeting.

The senator explained benefits of a scenic and wild river designation on the Oregon segment of the Owyhee River. He assured that grazing would be grandfathered on the Owyhee corridor.

When asked what he would do if it didn't go the way he had explained, he replied, "I'm just a telephone call away." I jumped up and asked, "What if you're not there to answer the phone?" He ignored me.

Several months later, John Falen and I were in Washington, D.C., with others, making the rounds of senatorial offices discussing impacts of the wild horse and burro act. We were on a subway car bound for the House office building when Sen. Hatfield came up with a paper in hand, which he was reading. He looked up, saw

our hats, and got on another car. I told John, "There goes the Owyhee."

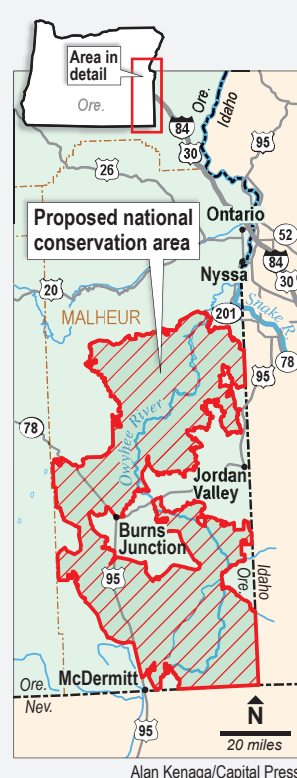
No sooner was the Owyhee designated than the environmental group known as ONDA (Oregon Natural Desert Association) was in court winning a decision banning grazing from the Owyhee.

Incidentally, I called the senator and he didn't answer.

ONDA has the gall to come again greatly expanding their reach beyond the Owyhee corridor. They are upfront about economic development present and future being side tracked in favor of tourism.

We cattlemen need not worry, grazing would be "grandfathered."

Michael Hanley  
Jordan Valley, Ore.



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

# Chipotle's 'abundance of caution' should include food safety

By MARK WAGONER  
For the Capital Press

Guest  
comment  
Mark Wagoner



"When it comes to our food, genetically modified ingredients don't make the cut," says the website of Chipotle, the restaurant chain.

You know what does seem to make the cut? E. coli, the bacteria that can cause cramps, diarrhea, vomiting and even death.

At least that appears to be the case following an E. coli outbreak among Chipotle customers. More than 40 people have fallen sick after eating at Chipotle in the Pacific Northwest, including 14 who were hospitalized, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The company closed 43 stores in the region.

Authorities say that the problems are probably worse than reported, due to people who became sick but failed to connect their maladies to having eaten at Chipotle. "The number of people made ill by this outbreak is likely more than identified," said a news release from the Oregon Health Authority last week.

Chipotle boasts that it's "committed to sourcing the very best ingredients we can find." Unfortunately, the very worst ingredients made it into Chipotle's food — and we still don't know the exact source of the E. coli.

This new incident comes on the heels of two troubling events last summer, when Chipotle suffered from outbreaks of norovirus in California and salmonella in Minnesota, sickening more than 140 people.

These episodes have delivered a hard blow to Chipotle, which likes to claim that it serves "food with integrity." It recently became the first national restaurant chain to swear off GMO ingredients.

We now see that despite Chipotle's sanctimony and sloganeering, the chain is more concerned with attacking GMOs and the conventional farmers who grow them than with the safety of its own customers.

This is what happens when political correctness and aggressive marketing trump sound science.

Before going any further, let's have a public-service announcement about the immediate crisis. Anyone who has eaten at Chipotle in the last month and has endured intestinal problems should stop reading this column and see a medical doctor. This is the advice of Marisa D'Angeli, who specializes in communicable diseases at Washington State University, according to the

Seattle Times.

E. coli poses a special threat to children and the elderly. The worst cases of contamination can kill, though no deaths have been linked to Chipotle so far.

In the near future, we'll need a second public-service announcement. It should come from Chipotle, and it should involve an apology for lying about the safety of GMOs.

"We don't believe the scientific community has reached a consensus on the long-term implications of widespread GMO cultivation and consumption," says Chipotle's website.

This is just plain wrong. Earlier this year, the Pew Research Center surveyed members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science on a range of subjects — and 88 percent of them agreed that it's "safe to eat genetically modified foods."

This is the very definition of a consensus.

Chipotle has the right to refuse to serve food with GMO ingredients. It does not enjoy the right to lie about what scientists believe — or to use its assaults on conventional agriculture as a distraction to cover up its own health violations.

Scientists at government agencies and universities around the world have studied GMOs for decades with rigor. We know with certainty that they've never caused anyone to hiccup, let alone put more than a dozen people in the hospital, as Chipotle's neglect of basic food safety in the Pacific Northwest has done.

On its corporate website, Chipotle is posting updates on the E. coli outbreak. Curiously, the company uses one phrase over and over: "out of an abundance of caution." It has shut down restaurants "out of an abundance of caution," it has discarded food "out of an abundance of caution," and so on.

An abundance of caution is the exact opposite of what Chipotle has practiced. The next time you have a craving for a burrito, think about that—and be sure to pick your restaurant with an abundance of caution.

Mark Wagoner is a third generation farmer in Walla Walla County, Wash., where they raise alfalfa seed. He volunteers as a board member for Truth About Trade & Technology/Global Farmer Network. www.truthabout-trade.org

## Letters policy

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