

...\$15-an-hour ballot measure passes 15,000 signatures

From Page 5

it is to pay the rent.”

If approved by voters, the measure would raise Oregon’s minimum wage to \$11.50 in 2017, \$13.25 in 2018, and \$15 in 2019. The initiative has the endorsement of dozens of unions, but business opposition is a certainty. Partridge hears some of it when he’s gathering signatures.

“There seems to be a lot of concern among better paid or middle income people about the impact on small business,” Partridge said.

His response: It’s not as dramatic as it sounds. In 1989, the Oregon Legislature raised the minimum wage from \$3.35 to \$4.75 over two years, which

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works out to about 20 percent a year — with no apparent shock to the economy. A raise from the current \$9.25 to \$15 over three years would work out similarly to 20 percent a year.

He hears concerns from some working people, on the other hand, that a big raise in the minimum wage might cause prices to go up. But there’s no sign of that so far in Seattle, where the minimum wage jumped from \$9.47 to \$11 on April 1. The most recent consumer price index report for the Seattle area

shows prices actually dropped 0.3 percent in the last two months (though they rose 1.2 percent over the previous 12 months.)

“I also point out that prices are going up anyway. Portland rents have doubled in 10 years.

It’s wages that are stagnant.”

OSEA’s support means the campaign is more likely to meet its goal of going into the February 2016 legislative session with 30,000 to 40,000 signatures in hand. The Legislature is expected to take up the issue of

raising the minimum wage. Partridge says if it raises it high enough — and ends a state ban on higher local minimum wages — the \$15 campaign might stand down and campaign to get a \$15 minimum wage on the ballot in Multnomah County.



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