

NEWS

LAWS WOULD MAKE EQUAL PAY A CIVIL RIGHT

Current laws in Oregon make it illegal to pay people of opposite sex different wages to do the same job. There are also federal protections. However, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) conducted a study between 2011 and 2014 and found that women in Oregon make an average 79 cents for every dollar a man makes.

Several lawmakers in the Oregon Legislature have decided that the current laws are not enough. Sen. Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland) and Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson (D-Portland) are the chief sponsors of HB 2006 and HB 2007, two bills that would offer additional safeguards for fair pay to all Oregon workers.

HB 2006 would make it a civil rights violation for an employer to pay workers who are not the same gender, but do the same job, different wages. There would be exceptions for employers who pay their workers differently based on seniority, merit, experience or job performance.

BOLI Commissioner Brad Avakian testified in support of the bill. He said since most people think of equal pay as a civil rights issue, it makes sense to put the law “where it should have been all along.”

Andrew Lewinter, an employment attorney based in Eugene, says the legislation would make it easier for employees to ensure their fair pay. Right now they would have to prove that the discrepancy between their pay and another employee’s pay was because the employer was discriminating against them based on sex. If the bill passed, Lewinter says the discriminatory intent would be “presumed by evidence of the discriminatory act.” The fact that their pay was different would be proof that the employer was violating the law.

Opposition to HB 2006 has come mainly from Republican legislators and organizations like Oregon Dairy Farmers and the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association. ORLA CEO Steve McCoid says the bill has “more exceptions than you can shake a stick at,” and that it is a “solution looking for a problem.”

McCoid says the current statute has not been used, so a new law isn’t needed. He also worries the law would put a

burden on employers by making them have to prove innocence, instead of the employee having to prove that they are guilty.

If HB 2006 were to pass, employers who violated the law could be forced to rehire employees and potentially give them back pay. They could also be forced to pay damages. Employees would have to file a complaint either with BOLI or in state court.

Lewinter says HB 2006 is needed in Lane County, because the problem is still out there. At the very least, he says the Legislature would be sending a message to employers saying this is something they should not do.

Lauri Trieger of Family Forward Oregon says the group is holding an Equal Pay (Un)Happy Hour in Eugene April 14

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to “bring attention to the persistent gender wage gap in this country and to provide an opportunity for people who want to be involved in making change to learn more about our organization and connect with one another.”

Another bill, HB 2007, is tied closely to equal pay legislation. It would make it illegal for employers to take disciplinary action against employees who talk about or disclose their wages. It would only apply to an employee’s own wage —

disclosing other workers’ wages would not be permitted.

Lewinter says he’s never had a client say they were disciplined for talking about his or her wage. But, he has heard many people say they don’t know what other people are paid because they are not allowed to talk about it.

Avakian of BOLI submitted written testimony to the Legislature stating that this bill would protect open communication among employees.

“It is much harder to find out if you are being paid fairly if you can’t talk to your coworkers,” he wrote.

HB 2007 would have penalties similar to HB 2006: back pay, re-hiring and injunctive relief. It would also require that an employee file a complaint with BOLI or in state court.

HB 2006 had a public hearing in the House Business and Labor Committee in February. It is still in Committee. HB 2007 passed through the House largely on a party line and is now in the Senate Workforce Committee.

Equal Pay (Un)Happy Hour is 5 pm April 14 at Turtles Bar and Restaurant. For more info go to wkly.ws/1zc, kids welcome. — *Lucy Ohlsen*

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY SCHEDULE

• ODOT is currently spraying roadsides. Call Tony Kilmer at ODOT District 5 at 744-8080 or call 1-888-996-8080 for herbicide application information. Highways I-5, 58 near **Pleasant Hill, 99, 105, 126** in Springfield and Beltline were sprayed recently.

• M Three Timber Co., 767-3785, plans to spray its **roadsides in Lane County** with Accord XRT II, Garlon 3A and/or Induce. See ODF notifications 2015-781-05361 and 2015-781-05364, call Brian Peterson or Brian Dally at 726-3588 or 935-2283 with questions.

• M Three Timber Co., 767-3785, plans to spray seedlings near **Muslin Creek, Silk Creek and Tucker Creek** with Plantskydd, a blood-meal based animal repellent, and No-Foam or Foam Buster. See ODF notification 2015-781-05353, call Brian Peterson at 935-2283 with questions.

• Cadore Timber, 485-1500, plans to hire Strata Forestry, 726-0845, to spray 10 acres near **Noisy Creek** with glyphosate, sulfometuron methyl, metsulfuron methyl, Velossa, Transline and/or Hardball. See ODF notification 2015-771-05454, call Tim Meehan at 726-3588 with questions.

Compiled by Jan Wroncy and Gary Hale, ForestlandDwellers.org, 342-8332.

POLLUTION UPDATE

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is accepting comments on two applications for Clean Water Act construction discharge permits until 5 pm Thursday, April 9. Both projects involve the disturbance of 5 acres or more of land. The first project is at **Swanson Group’s Springfield Plywood/Veneer Facility**, located at 1651 South F St., and the other project is at **Roosevelt Middle School** (located at 680 E. 24th Ave. in Eugene). Visit goo.gl/Yp4iAK for information on how to submit comments.

Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project



ACTIVIST ! LERT

• The **Cottage Grove Blackberry Pie Society** will host a community conversation with Lane County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky at 7 pm Thursday, April 2, at Hard Knocks Brewing, 1024 E. Main St. in Cottage Grove as part of the Blackberry Pie Speakers Series. Mokrohisky, who has been the county administrator since May 2014, will address local and county issues and answer questions from the audience. Call Leslie Rubenstein at 521-2887 or email blackberrypie@gmail.com.

• **Kai Huschke**, organizer for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, will speak at 6:30 pm Thursday, April 2, at the Siuslaw Public Library in Florence; at 6 pm Friday, April 3, at the LCC Downtown Center Room 108 in Eugene; and at 6 pm Saturday, April 4, at the Springfield Public Library. Free, but donations accepted. Call 255-0272 for more information.

• Encircle Films will screen ***The Homestretch*** documentary with speakers and audience discussion at 6 pm Thursday, April 2, at Bijou Art Cinemas, 492 E. 13th Ave. “We’re looking for community organizations and civic-minded people to come take part in educating and informing audience about what’s going on locally” with homeless teens, says organizer Vicki Anderson. Call 543-0223 or email vicki@encirclefilms.org.

• The **Communities of Color Network** will meet at 5:30 pm Friday, April 3, at the Lane Native American Longhouse (Building 31) on the LCC main campus. Call 463-5307 or email koechigd@lanecc.edu.

• **McKenzie Memories**, an annual fundraiser for the McKenzie River Trust, will be at 6 pm Friday, April 3, at Cozmic, 199 W. 8th Ave., and is expected to sell out for the fourth year in a row. Speakers will include Oregon author William Sullivan and Jim Goodpasture. Tickets in advance are \$10 and available online at mckenzieviver.org.

• Lane Community College’s Native American Student Association invites the public to its **annual powwow** on Saturday, April 4, in the gymnasium, Building 5. Grand entries at 1 pm and 7 pm. Organizers say the event has increased the number of Native American students attending Lane. All drums and dancers are welcome. No alcohol or drugs are permitted. Free event, for more information go to wkly.ws/1ze.

• The **Planned Parenthood Day of Action** is Monday, April 6, in Salem, and a Eugene contingent is planning to join others from around the state. Contact ppaoregon.org to get involved.

• **LTD’s annual route review** will go to public hearing at 5:30 pm Monday, April 6, at the Eugene Public Library downtown. Email comments to ltl@ltd.org or call 682-6100.

• A community forum on “**Policing the Police**: Your Right to Record Law Enforcement” will be from 6 to 8 pm Tuesday, April 7, at the UO Law School Room 110, 1515 Agate St., and it’s sponsored by the Civil Liberties Defense Center. The EPD is in the process of drafting a new policy regarding the right of the public to record police interactions, organizers say. “This forum will discuss your constitutional rights to record police, why this right and responsibility is important to ensure police accountability, and how to record legally and safely.”

• **Katie Singer**, author of *An Electronic Silent Spring*, will speak at 10 am Thursday, April 9, at the LCC Main Campus Longhouse, Building 31. Singer is a medical journalist who will report on the Telecommunications Act and legal developments, impacts of radiation on human health and wildlife, and erosion of community rights regarding electromagnetic emissions. Call 463-5140 for more information.

• **Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer** will speak at a 6:30 pm dinner event Thursday, April 9, at Valley River Inn. Tickets at \$100 are available at lanegop.org or call 342-4166. Tickets to the private reception have been sold out. Brewer is in Oregon in support of Republican candidates, including whoever might run against Gov. Kate Brown in 2016.