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This is a pragmatic minimum wage law

How did leaders draw lines between county tiers?

Politics is renowned for being the art of the possible. That is the most appropriate way of looking at the minimum wage law that Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed last Thursday.

The law — which schedules pay increases within three tiers of counties across the state — was designed to head off more extreme plans, such as the \$15 Now campaign. The new law lowers the wage threshold for businesses in counties outside the state's hottest economies. It also gives those businesses time to adjust.

Clatsop County, along with Tillamook and Columbia, is in the middle tier of counties. In July the minimum wage across the state will move from \$9.25 to \$9.75. Then, Clatsop County's minimum wage will climb in stair-steps, reaching \$13.50 over six years.

Negotiations over these tiers were done behind closed doors. There was no hearing to explain them. Paris Achen of our statehouse bureau reports that legislators looked "at how much was needed in each county to be self-sufficient. The research

comes out of the University of Washington."

The Center for Women's Welfare at UW says that, "The Self-Sufficiency Standard defines how much families need to meet basic needs without the help of public or private assistance."

So the price of housing is one of the major variants in separating Oregon counties. We still do not know precisely how legislators inside the room decided where to draw the line between the tiers. Legislative leaders should tell us about that.

For many Clatsop County small- and mid-sized business, paying a rising minimum wage will be a squeeze. It should be said, however, that the financial demand of the new law will be easier to bear than what's planned for the November ballot. If you are pragmatist and a realist, this was a decent outcome within Oregon's political climate.

Supreme Court needs real world experience

We learned last week that President Obama is vetting an Iowa federal appellate judge for the vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. There is a political angle in this, of course.

Judge Jane L. Kelly was praised heavily by Iowa's Republican Sen. Charles Grassley, during her prior confirmation hearing. Grassley is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Kelly won eventual Senate confirmation by a wide margin. Grassley and Kelly are Iowans. Thus a Kelly nomination to the Supreme Court would be difficult for Grassley to ignore.

Beyond the political calculus, there is an appealing aspect to the prospect of Judge Kelly's being nominated. She would bring real-world perspective to the court. She has worked as a criminal defense lawyer. *The Des Moines Register* noted last

week that, "Former prosecutors, government lawyers and scholars make up most of the bench today. Kelly stands out as a federal public defender who represented several of the most recognizable names to face criminal prosecution in Iowa courtrooms."

The malady that afflicts the Supreme Court is that justices mainly come from a narrow and rarefied slice of academia, think tanks and government law. They lack first-hand experience with courtroom advocacy in criminal trials or even with handling non-criminal clients. Judge Kelly has said that in the course of her criminal defense work she has spent so much time inside prisons that she's probably served the equivalent of a sentence for a misdemeanor.

It is anybody's guess how this will turn out. President Obama is smart to seek a nominee such as Judge Kelly.



Brynn Anderson/AP Photo
 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump waves to the crowd before he speaks during a campaign rally Saturday, in Orlando, Fla.

Chickens, home to roost

By MAUREEN DOWD
New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Here's why the Trump campaign is wicked fun:

I watched Donald Trump in New York for decades, as a bachelor swanning, a party fixture mingling, a master of bling and bluster.

I went with him on his art-filled plane in 1999 as he dipped his toe in the presidential pool and saw him shyly approach his first political rope line, even as he bragged that other candidates didn't draw as many cameras or have a supermodel by their side.

So I can assure you of two things. No one is more shocked at how far, how fast, Trump has come than Trump.

Watching him morph into a pol in real time and wriggle away from the junior-varsity GOP chuckleheads trying to tackle him is hypnotic. He's like the blond alien in the 1995 movie "Species," who mutates from ova to adult in months, regenerating and reconfiguring at warp speed to escape the establishment, kill everyone in sight and eliminate the human race.

The other thing I know is that Trump really wants to be president. It isn't a joke anymore. People who are told that they should be president get infected. The less qualified and prepared they are, like Dan Quayle and W., the less they worry. And the more qualified and prepared they are, like Colin Powell and Mario Cuomo, the more they can tie themselves in Jesuitical knots.

The most enjoyable thing about the Trump phenomenon has been watching him make monkeys out of a lot of people who had it coming.

Marco Rubio, a frothy focus-grouped concoction whose main qualifications to be president consist of a nice smile and an easy wit, has been mocking Trump as a con man.

Real estate developers are con men by nature, trying to get what they want at the lowest price and sell it at the highest price, overpromising how great it's going to be.

As Maria Konnikova, the author of *The Confidence Game*, notes, con men are created by the yearning of their marks "to believe in something that gives life meaning. ... Their genius lies in figuring out what, precisely, it is we want, and how they can present themselves as the perfect vehicle for delivering on that desire."

It's delicious watching the neocoon men who tricked the country and gulled the naive W. into the Iraq invasion go ballistic trying to stop the Gotham con man.

Bill Kristol of *The Weekly Standard* wrote an outraged column about why there wasn't more outrage at Trump, who correctly pointed out that Americans were deceived into a catastrophic war.

Kristol, the midwife to three debacles — Dan Quayle, Iraq and Sarah Palin — solicited suggestions for the name of the new party that Republicans will have to start if Trump secures the nomination. How about "Losers"?

Eliot Cohen, a former W. State Department official who pushed to "liberate" Iraq, said Trump would be "an unmitigated disaster for American foreign policy." And Robert Kagan, who backed the Iraq War, said "the only choice will be to vote for Hillary Clinton." Max Boot concurred.



Gerald Herbert/AP Photo
 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump makes a boxing gesture while greeting the crowd after speaking at a campaign rally in New Orleans, Friday.

It's amazing, having been tainted by the worst foreign policy disaster in American history, that the Republican national security intelligentsia would unite against a Trump presidency in an open letter, charging that he would "make America less safe" and "diminish our standing in the world." Sort of like the Iraq invasion?

Even though he made some good points, especially about the Trump Steaks shame spiral, it's pretty rich to have Mitt Romney, the man who called on 11 million people to "self-deport," talking about Trump's bigotry.

Trump was right about Romney. When you lose a race that you should have won by being an inept phony, you can't call this year's front-runner an inept phony.

It's delightful to see the encrusted political king-making class utter a primal scream as Trump smashes their golden apple cart. He's a real threat to the cozy, greedy, oleaginous cartel, their own Creature from the Black Lagoon.

For all the Republican establishment's self-righteous bleating, Trump is nothing more than an unvarnished, cruder version. For years, it has fanned, stoked and exploited the worst angels among the nativists, racists, Pharisees and angry white men, concurring in anti-immigrant measures, restricting minority voting, whipping up anti-Planned Parenthood hysteria and enabling gun nuts.

How lame was it that after saying he was a crazy choice, Rubio, Ted Cruz, Paul Ryan and John McCain turned around and said they will support Trump if he's the nominee?

After watching Hillary Clinton, for whom campaigning is a nuisance, and Barack Obama, who disdains politics, it's fun to see someone having fun. Like Bill Clinton, Trump talks and talks to crowds. They feed his narcissism, and in turn, he creates an intimacy even in an arena that leaves both sides awash in pleasure. It's easy to believe him when he says that, unlike President Obama, he would enjoy endlessly negotiating with obstructionists and those on the other side of the aisle.

That's the wicked fun part. But then there's the simply wicked part.

Trump wants to be seen as Ronald Reagan but often he's more like Pat Buchanan, playing to the crowd's prejudices just to hear the bloodthirsty

roar, evoking memories of Molly Ivins' observation about Buchanan's 1992 culture wars speech, that it was translated from the original German.

Trump, who was slow to disavow David Duke and the Klan, stokes the gladiatorial fever, leading to minorities being roughed up and the press being bullied. His mocking of a *Times* reporter with a disability was grotesque.

He has a tenuous relationship with the truth and an inch-deep understanding of policy. Although it is compelling when he says he would surround himself with an A team in the White House, his campaign is not chock-a-block with A-team players. On Friday, his team put out a press release saying Trump would campaign this weekend in a town called "Witchita" in the state of "Kansas." And he has not brought on heavyweights who could bring him up to speed on substance.

He has a nasty gift for dragging everyone down to his own vulgar level. Presidential campaigns should not be about belittling people's appearances or bragging about your own appendages. Whatever his flaws, Obama has reinforced our desire for class in presidents.

After doubling down on his outrageous statements and saying he would force the military to follow his orders to break international laws involving torture and murdering terrorists' families, Trump said on Friday that he would not do that. Good to know.

In a rare show of regret, he said he does "understand that the United States is bound by laws and treaties and I will not order our military or other officials to violate those laws and will seek their advice on such matters."

Trump sees his egregious positions on immigration, torture and terrorism revenge as opening bids. After Super Tuesday, he told reporters that while they might be surprised, he would be a "unifier, once we get all of this finished."

But he should take a lesson from Condi Rice. She went along with the Iraq invasion, thinking she could reposition W. on the side of diplomacy afterward. But some positions are so extreme, there's no coming back. Your deal with the devil is sealed.

Editorials that appear on this page are written by Publisher Steve Forrester and Matt Winters, editor of the *Chinook Observer* and *Coast River Business Journal*, or staff members from the EO Media Group's sister newspapers.