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EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2015

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Minimum wage debate

Oregon Legislature considers \$15 an hour

By JONATHAN J. COOPER
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature on Monday opened debate about several proposals to boost the minimum wage as high as \$15 an hour.

The idea is hugely popular with voters and interest groups

on the left, but it's far from clear whether it has sufficient support in the Legislature.

House and Senate committees held three hearings on the minimum wage, including a rare evening session to allow people to weigh in after business hours, but the committees took no formal action.

Oregon currently has the nation's second highest wage floor at \$9.25 an hour, \$2 higher than the federal minimum.

The proponents say raising the minimum wage would help low-wage workers escape poverty.

"No one who works should live in poverty," Justin Norton-Kertzen, who works with an interest group seeking to raise the minimum wage, told the House Committee on Business and Labor.

Business interests are mounting aggressive opposition, calling the idea a job killer and warning it will make Oregon less competitive to employers. They say raising the minimum wage would significantly in-

See MINIMUM WAGE/10A

Umatilla teacher dies in car crash

East Oregonian

Umatilla School District was in mourning on Monday after a first grade teacher at McNary Heights Elementary School was killed in a single-vehicle car crash over the weekend.

Elisabet Flores, 39, was driving with her husband, Sergio Murguia, and 13-year-old son on Westland Road south of Hermiston at about 10 p.m. on Saturday when she drove off the roadway and crashed into a chain link fence near the Hermiston rural fire station.

Sheriff Terry Rowan said the top rail of the fence penetrated the 2005 Nissan Altima and critically injured Flores. The passengers were unharmed but Flores was transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, where she was pronounced dead.

He said the cause of the crash is still under investigation but it doesn't look like drugs or alcohol were a factor, said Rowan.

Flores taught first grade at McNary Heights Elementary School and had been with the district for 10 years. She also had three children in the Umatilla school system.

"Her loss is felt by staff, students and the community," superintendent Heidi Sipe said.

Sipe called Flores a "tremendous educator and dedicated mother." She said Flores was known at the school as an especially talented reading instructor and had been involved over the years in a number of reading initiatives, most recently by teaching an after school class called Rocket Readers to help boost students' reading skills.

"Her students excelled under her instruction and she was truly dedicated to ensuring their success," she said.

Sipe said Flores, who was bilingual, was also quick to volunteer around the school for anything that would benefit students and was a "strong conduit between the school and many families."



Flores



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Karate kids

A pair of karate students, who did not wish to be identified, practice their form using tonfa on Monday outside the Daishu Kan karate school in Pendleton. The tonfa is a traditional Okinawan martial arts weapon made from a millstone handle. It was developed in medieval Japan as a way for peasants to protect themselves.

PENDLETON

Former teacher accused of sex with PHS student

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A former Pendleton High School teacher remains in jail following his arrest last week for having sex with a 17-year-old student.

Umatilla County District Attorney's Office last week charged Timothy Walter Frey, 26, with three counts of second-degree sexual abuse, ac-



Frey

cording to court records. The charging document states Frey had sexual intercourse with the student on three occasions between March 16 and April 2. Because she was not 18, the student cannot give legal consent. There is no indication the allegations happened at Pendleton High School.

Frey taught at the high school as a substitute, according to school district Superintendent Jon Peterson.

Peterson said in an email that Frey "has not been in one of our classrooms since March 13 ... He did serve as a long-term substitute for a teacher on leave at PHS for approximately four months earlier this year. He has also substituted in other districts in our area this year and last."

Peterson was not available for additional comment Monday. A document in the case file at the Umatilla County Courthouse described Frey as a teacher until March 13, when he took a full time job with the Oregon National Guard. Lt. Col. Alan Gronewald, commander of the Guard in Pendleton, confirmed Frey was a member of the Guard.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts last week told news agencies the

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BMCC ARTS & CULTURE FESTIVAL

Giving birth in third-world Nepal

Author finds plenty of adventure and adversity in life story

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Anthropologists often immerse themselves in foreign cultures. But in 1987, Elizabeth realized she'd gone all in.

The Stanford doctoral student found herself in Nepal, lying in a loft above a shed filled with live water buffalo, awaiting the birth of her first child. Bats flew in and out of the open-air attic. Spiders spun webs nearby and the aroma from below wafted up.

Enslin told the story Monday at the Blue Mountain Community College Arts & Culture Festival, which runs all week. She had married Nepal native and fellow doctoral student Pramod Parajuli and they had traveled to the region to do research. She became pregnant and moved into the home of Pramod's parents on the plains of Nepal. Her book "While the Gods Were Sleeping: A Journey Through Love and Rebellion in Nepal" describes an experience both rich and challenging.

After 40 hours of labor, her in-laws took her from the shed and put her in a three-wheeled taxi for a 45-mile ride over rutted roads to a hospital where some patients slept on straw mats in the hallway. She had to provide her own bottle of antiseptic. Her son arrived underweight, but healthy.

"It still makes my heart race to think of that time and what could have gone wrong," she said.

The author, who now lives in Eastern Oregon, described the process of fitting into such an alien culture. Language came slowly. Her husband's



More inside

The BMCC Arts & Culture Festival continues this week in Pendleton and Hermiston. For a schedule, see Page 5A.

Author Elizabeth Enslin talks to an audience in the Blue Mountain Community theater Monday about her adventures in Nepal, the subject of her book "While the Gods Lay Sleeping: a Journey Through Love and Rebellion in Nepal."

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

high-caste Brahman family, though they welcomed her, also practiced strict Hindu traditions that kept her at arm's length. That was especially true in a home where her father-in-law practiced as a Hindu priest. She couldn't help prepare food because she, as a pregnant woman, was considered impure.

Physically, living conditions were crude with kerosene lanterns, no indoor plumbing and outdoor latrines. Monsoons created instant floods.

But, she also experienced the closeness of an extended family and a Nepalese culture that loves children.

"People stopped by, begging to hold my son and carry him around. He spent his first days in lots of different arms," Enslin said. "I learned to become a mother in this very supportive environment."

While in Nepal, Enslin observed a budding women's rights movement that pushed for more respect in a culture where women often don't learn to read or write, don't own land and face physical abuse. Local female activists faced strong male opposition.

"They were harassed by the men,"

See NEPAL/10A



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