

WAGE: Lawmakers have been negotiating a deal for weeks

Continued from 1A

"We are well on track to have enough signatures collected by July to put this on the ballot," Norton-Kertson said.

"With more than half of likely voters in Oregon already polling in favor of \$15 and numerous polls conducted statewide, a statewide \$15 minimum wage really is inevitable," he said. "It's a grassroots movement, and it isn't just going to go away because any old deal is struck in the state Legislature."

He said the only compromises his group would support are \$15 per hour in the most expensive parts of the state, namely Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties, or a repeal of a law that prevents cities and counties from increasing minimum wages above the state limit.

"If one or both of these can't be accomplished this session, then we'll do everything we can to get the support needed to put IP 41 on the ballot and win,"

Norton-Kertson said.

Betsy Earls of Associated Oregon Industries, which opposes boosting the minimum, advised lawmakers to spend their time on other issues.

"It sounds like ... there will be at least one ballot measure going forward no matter what," Earls said. "What I would say to you is we will have to fight that ballot measure probably so we will have to expend resources regardless of what you guys do. I would advise you to sit tight, do nothing."

Lawmakers, the governor's advisers and other stakeholders have been negotiating a minimum wage deal for weeks behind closed doors. Democratic leaders have indicated they want to pass legislation in February to head off a battle at the ballot box in November over two dueling initiatives to hike minimum wage.

One is the \$15 proposal. Another union-backed initiative would raise the minimum to \$13.50 statewide and give cities and counties authority to

increase the minimum above that. The petitioners for that initiative have said from the outset that they launched the campaign to spur lawmakers to action this session.

"We're hoping to come up with a proposal that makes the most sense and addresses the most concerns and also makes the ballot measures unnecessary," said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland. "We haven't yet nailed down what that would be, the place between the competing interests."

Dembrow had initially planned to release starting numbers for his proposal in advance of Thursday night's public hearing at the Capitol.

He said he had second thoughts about releasing numbers before the hearing because he wants to use feedback to craft a proposal for the session, which commences Feb. 1.

"I don't want to come up with a proposal that is take it or leave it," Dembrow said. "I want to propose something that has some consensus around it."

Dembrow's proposal

would set three different regional minimums based on area median income and cost of living. The concept is based on research by North Star Civic Foundation that found different minimums would better suit Oregon's "uneven state economy."

The House Business and Labor Committee plans to submit a proposal that is similar to the initiative to boost the minimum to \$13.50 and give cities and counties authority to raise wages above that threshold.

It was unclear whether Gov. Kate Brown also planned to present a separate proposal.

"The governor has been open about her support for raising the minimum wage and has been consulting stakeholders," said Kristen Grainger, Brown's communications director. "It is premature to say what a proposal might look like or when it might be unveiled."

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

HERMISTON

Councilor nominated for state women's commission

East Oregonian

Hermiston city councilor Clara Beas Fitzgerald said she also has been nominated by Governor Kate Brown for a seat on the Oregon Commission for Women.

She was the only Umatilla County resident on the governor's list of names submitted for senate confirmation during the February legislative session.

Beas Fitzgerald said she was "speechless" at the honor and would do what she could to represent Eastern Oregon women well. She will testify at a senate confirmation hearing in Salem on Feb. 9.

"I think I will be a good fit because I work with so many different types of

women," she said.

In addition to her work as a city councilor, Beas Fitzgerald said she also has occasion to speak with various Eastern Oregon women through her work on the Hispanic Advisory Committee and as a teacher at Sam Boardman Elementary School.

The Oregon Commission for Women was formed in 1964 by Governor Mark Hatfield to advise him on the needs and concerns of the state's women. The commission's stated goals today include advocating for equal treatment in the workplace and under the law, celebrating the accomplishments of the state's women and helping women access resources and education.



Beas Fitzgerald

CARS: 14.5 percent of auto dealerships are female-owned

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Avenue lot near the Umatilla County Court House. An eight-year-old dachshund named Marley snoozed on a love seat near the door, her head resting on a fuzzy teal afghan. A space heater warmed the room. Two guitars sat nearby.

Eckman tilted her head toward the guitars and smiled.

"There's downtime in this business," she said.

The businesswoman got her start in car sales at Comrie Olds-Cadillac GMC in Pendleton. After 12 years, she struck out on her own.

"It was time for her to venture out and do her own thing," Whitney said.

Whitney joined last April. She has approachable looks and a background in finance and lending. She most recently managed the Pendleton branch of Wells Fargo Bank. Looking for more time with her family, she teamed up with her mother in the car business.

Eckman originally set up on Court, moving across the street in 2007 to a location that had a touch more visibility. Then she was an oddity — women own only a tiny fraction of American car dealerships. The numbers are rising slowly. Regional Economist Dallas Fridley, of the Oregon

"Used car dealers aren't scary anymore. This is a small town — reputation is everything. It's about making people happy."

— Shelley Whitney, Deana's Car Biz

Employment Department, said 14.5 percent of auto dealerships are female-owned, according to 2012 Census Bureau numbers. Another 9.4 percent are equally male/female-owned. That compares with 36.5 percent and nine percent of U.S. businesses as a whole. About 10 percent of Oregon dealerships are owned by women, with another 20 percent equally female/male owned.

"I get the occasional shocked reaction to learning the business is female-owned," she said.

In the early days, she admitted to occasional "What have I done?" moments. Eckman started with only a few cars and slowly worked her way up to 25 or so.

When the women travel to car auctions, they often find themselves in a crowd of men.

"It's interesting to see all those guys and my little mama bidding against each other," Whitney said, grinning at Eckman. "At the last auction, I saw two other women and about 50 men."

Despite the ratio that particular day, the women

say the industry is changing. More women own dealerships. Women customers have more buying power. In the wider automotive world, GM named Mary Barra its first female CEO in 2013, the first woman to head a major car company.

"Women are becoming players in the car industry," Whitney said.

Andy Friedlander, communications director at the National Independent Automobile Dealers Association, agreed with Whitney. Last year's top NIADA dealer, for instance, was a woman.

"Women are becoming more active in the association and in the industry," Friedlander said. "There are statistics that show something like 80 percent of auto purchases are made by or influenced by women."

"Whether they are the primary breadwinner or not, they have a lot of power," Whitney said. "The dynamic has switched."

Eckman said today's best sales approach is softer and more straightforward. Hagging, they say, isn't necessary.

"We cater to a lot of millennials — they're Internet savvy," Eckman said. "People do a lot of their own research."

Choosing vehicles is a critical process for the pair. At auctions, they walk through rows of vehicles looking for fuel efficient cars and trucks. Eckman has the vehicles inspected before she hands over cash.

Deana's is one of four car dealers in Pendleton. None sell new cars.

Eckman said she can remember a time when the city had a dozen or more new and used dealerships. She said her business benefits from referrals and repeat sales. To people who leave town to car shop, Eckman and Whitney would urge them to look in their own back yard. A small dealer doesn't mean higher prices, less-pristine cars or shady practices, they said. Disreputable lots eventually fade away.

"Used car dealers aren't scary anymore," Whitney said. "This is a small town — reputation is everything. It's about making people happy."

"It's a seamless process," Eckman said. "You'll sit on the couch next to Marley and we'll close your deal."

Contact Kathy Aney at kane@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

SHERIFF: 'I believe the government is going to have to concede to something'

Continued from 1A

said "a few" other Grant County residents attended the meeting as well.

"I had no idea who I was meeting with when we had lunch (Tuesday)," he said. "I walked in, I realized who they were and I sat and listened to them ... They actually wanted me to come down there and make a stand, and I said 'Not without the (Harney County) sheriff's blessing.'"

Palmer said he has spoken to Harney County Sheriff David Ward and told him he would not interfere without permission. Palmer said he has "a pretty good working relationship" with the sheriff from the neighboring county.

Palmer said, however, that he was not willing to excoriate the occupation either.

"About the only thing (Ward) really told me is I'm welcome to come down there if I would shame and humiliate them into giving up and I said, 'No, I won't do that,'" Palmer said. "I'm not in the business of denouncing or shaming or humiliating anybody."

Ward could not immediately be reached for comment.

Grant County Court Judge Scott Myers said his Harney County counterpart Steve Grasty warned him

that members of the armed group may have been traveling to Grant County.

Myers said he participated in an Association of Oregon Counties conference call with Grasty and leaders of most Eastern Oregon counties on Wednesday. They discussed the possibility that the armed group could migrate elsewhere.

"Grasty said that we should all be concerned about the likelihood of arrival (of the armed group) and the safety of our citizens," Myers said. "My biggest concern would just be public safety. I don't know that they would try to take over a building or anything like that ... I am concerned, but I don't expect an occupation. I don't expect them to come and hold up (here), but there's always that possibility."

Palmer has previously expressed disappointment with some federal land management policies, specifically U.S. Forest Service road closures in Grant County. In 2015, he deputized a group of residents to create a county natural resources plan in hope of providing local government more leverage when working with federal agencies. The plan was not approved by county governance, but a petition has been filed to put it up for a county-wide vote.

A look at Powerball winners and losers

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — When the largest-ever lottery prize is finally awarded, the winners and losers will extend well beyond the lucky few who hit the jackpot and the multitudes of disappointed ticket buyers. Here's a breakdown of how Powerball affects the players, the public and others.

Winner: Government programs

The biggest Powerball winner is actually state government in the jurisdictions that participate. That's 44 states as well as the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Each jurisdiction spends the money raised through the lottery differently, with the rules determined by state Legislatures. In some states, the money goes directly to education or college scholarships. Elsewhere, it might fund transportation. Some states send it to their general fund, where lawmakers decide how to use it.

In fiscal year 2015, for example, Powerball and other lottery games generated \$74.5 million for Iowa's general fund. In California, the nation's most populous state, the games raised about \$1.3 billion for education in the 2014 fiscal year.

Winner: Convenience store owners

Owners of convenience stores and other ticket-selling locations earn a small percentage of each sale, but more important, people often buy something extra when they stop for Powerball tickets.

At the tiny Marketplace

shop in downtown Des Moines, owner Anastasia Walsh said her overall sales have been up about 10 percent in recent weeks because of all the Powerball sales.

Winner: The winners of smaller prizes

Lottery officials often note that while the jackpot gets all the attention, far more players get a nice consolation prize of \$1 million for matching the five white balls but missing the Powerball. And if they pay an extra dollar when they buy their ticket, that prize can double to \$2 million.

Winner: The actual winners

Until Wednesday, there had been no Powerball winner since early November. That's why the jackpot grew so large, from an initial \$40 million to \$1.5 billion.

Shortly after the drawing Wednesday night, the California Lottery announced a jackpot-winning ticket was sold in suburban Los Angeles.

Spokesman Alex Travesta told The Associated Press it was sold at a 7-Eleven in Chino Hills, about 25 miles northeast of Anaheim.

The identity of the winner is not yet known, and it could take several hours before officials know whether any other tickets were sold elsewhere that matched all six numbers: 4-8-19-27-34 and Powerball 10. Determining whether anyone matched all six can sometimes take hours.

As more people play Powerball, the chances for a winner improve, simply because more of the 292.2 million possible number

combinations are covered. The chances also grow that more than one person will match the five white balls and one red Powerball, meaning the prize could be divvied up between two or more winners.

Loser: Problem gamblers

In the past week, calls to the Washington-based National Council on Problem Gambling's help line have soared, largely because of interest in the Powerball jackpot, Executive Director Keith Whyte said.

The council suddenly has so much attention that its website crashed earlier in the week from all the extra traffic.

Whyte said the surge in interest in Powerball is especially difficult on people who have managed to stop gambling but now find their friends and co-workers talking about the big prize.

"It does glamorize it," he said. "It seems like everyone is doing it and if not, what's wrong with you?"

Loser: Statisticians

Pity those who study statistics and other forms of math, as so many people across the country dream of a prize against all odds.

The odds of 1 in 292.2 million are even worse than the 1 in 175 million odds that were in place until last fall, when the Powerball system was changed to build bigger jackpots.

"The odds are so large," said Scott A. Norris, an assistant professor of mathematics at Southern Methodist University, "that people don't have any sense of what they mean."

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