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EAST OREGONIAN

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\$1.50

MINIMUM WAGE IN OREGON

Not if, but how

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

When it comes to a minimum wage hike in Oregon, the question these days seems to be how, not if, it will be accomplished.

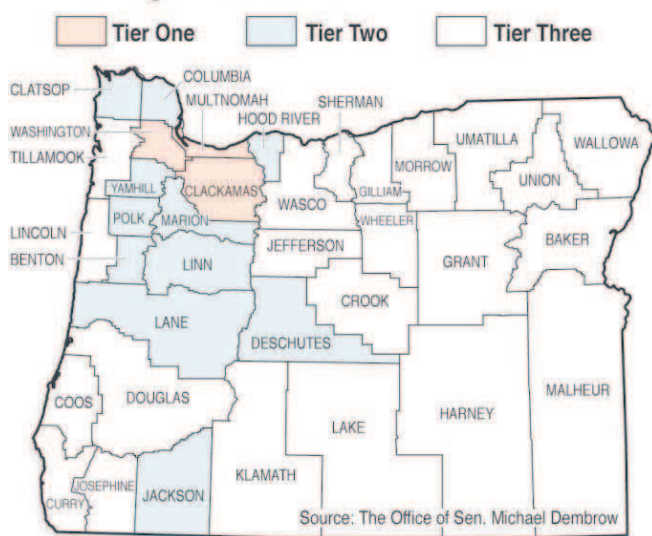
At least three different plans are headed for debate on the House and Senate floor during the session that begins on Feb. 1, and activists are gathering signatures for two separate ballot measures.

On Thursday, Governor Kate Brown announced her plan, calling for a separate minimum wage inside the Portland Urban Growth Boundary that would reach \$15.52 by 2022. Outside the Portland area, minimum wage would be raised to \$10.25 in 2017 and incrementally increase to \$13.50 by 2022.

Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), chair of the Senate Workforce Committee, has been working on his own bill that

Legislator floats minimum wage deal

Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland) has proposed a minimum wage compromise that would break the state into three regions, creating a higher minimum wage in the metro area and a lower minimum wage for rural counties.



Jade McDowell and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

would break the state into three regions based on cost of living. The highest wages

would be in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. Eleven counties on the western side of the state

would fall in the middle. Eastern Oregon and sections of the coast would fall under a lower "Tier 3" increase. Dembrow has yet to specify how quickly wages would rise in each tier.

A separate union-backed bill would raise all of Oregon's minimum wage to \$13.50 by 2019 while lifting the current ban on allowing individual cities to set their own minimum wage higher.

If Democrats fail to build enough consensus to raise minimum wage significantly from its current level of \$9.25 an hour, activists have promised to put the issue on the ballot in November.

Raise the Wage Oregon, a coalition of unions and political groups, is gathering signatures for a ballot measure that would raise statewide minimum wage to \$13.50 by 2018 and end the ban on cities setting their own, higher minimum wage.

See **WAGE/12A**

Eastern Oregon business owners worry over hike

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

If activists pushing for a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Oregon get their way, more than half of Umatilla County workers are in for a raise.

A 2015 report by economist Dallas Fridley estimated 52 percent of Umatilla County's workforce makes less than \$15 an hour and 43 percent of Morrow County workers do.

While those workers might relish the thought of a jump in pay, many business owners are worried about how they will pay for it.

Sam Jackson, owner of Crazy Mike's Video in Hermiston, said proposals to raise minimum wage from \$9.25 an hour to \$13.50 or \$15 could mean she would

See **BUSINESS/12A**

"Nothing's free. If you raise minimum wage by 50 percent, someone has to pay for that."

— **Joseph Franell**, Eastern Oregon Telecom CEO

Deer Ridge will house inmates in February

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Department of Corrections plans to move nearly 800 inmates in late February to a vacant medium-security facility at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution in Madras.

The move, which will cost \$2.5 million, is the first in a two-step plan to accommodate unanticipated growth in the state's prison population. The inmates will be moved from a smaller minimum-security complex at Deer Ridge that lacks room for more beds.

"That plan is in motion," said DOC Director Colette Peters.

The entire plan involves opening 200 more beds. If fully implemented, the expansion is estimated to cost a total of \$9.5 million.

"It gives you an idea of

See **PRISON/12A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Benny Hill of Pendleton changed to an e-cigarette as a means to quit using tobacco products more than three years ago.

Clearing the smoke

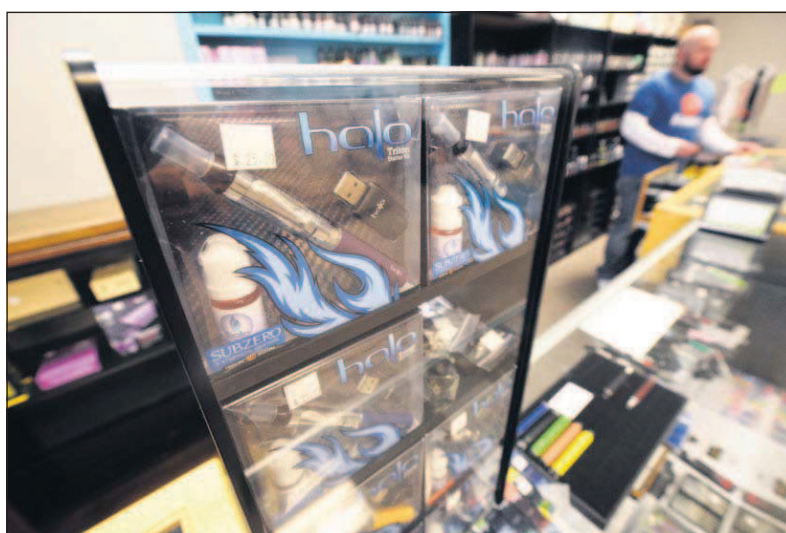
Risk of e-cigarettes still hazy as smokers switch from tobacco to e-juice

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Steve Humphrey started smoking tobacco as a teen and worked his way up to two packs a day. For decades, he tried to stop.

"I tried to quit a thousand times," Humphrey said. "Sometimes it was a couple of weeks, but never for very long."

Finally, about a year ago, the Pendleton blues musician and retired finance manager decided to try vaping. With vaping, battery-operated devices such as e-cigarettes deliver nicotine in an inhalable vapor. There is no combustion. A coil inside heats flavored liquid



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The vaping industry has seen an explosion in the number of users over the last few years as tobacco users look for a way to quit.

known as e-juice.

Humphrey decided he had nothing to lose.

"I went to a vaping shop and bought a starter kit," he said. "I started that day and have never had

a cigarette since."

Humphrey had found success in what some call the Wild West of smoking cessation.

The largely unregulated vaping industry has rapidly expanded since a Chinese chemist invented the e-cigarette about 13 years ago. But disagreement about the health of vaping abounds. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned that e-cigarettes may be harmful and toxic. The World Health Organization called for a ban on indoor use and asked for restricted sales to minors. Portland State University researchers determined that the carcinogen formaldehyde can be present in electronic cigarette vapor.

As of Jan. 1, Oregonians may no longer vape in indoor public places — e-cigarettes now fall under the Clean Air Act. The ban

See **VAPING/12A**



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