

Brown signs minimum wage hike plan into law

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown signed landmark legislation Wednesday to set a three-tier minimum wage increase schedule around the state.

The plan, which establishes a higher minimum wage in the Portland area and a lower amount in areas with a struggling economy, is the first of its kind in the nation, said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland.

"I am so delighted to be here today to celebrate the achievement of my top priority for the short session to raise Oregon's minimum wage," Brown said. "Over the past few weeks, I've done a lot of talking about how important it is for hardworking Oregonians to get a much needed raise in order to keep up with the rising cost of housing, rent, food and other necessities."

Dembrow and Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, crafted the plan, contained in Senate Bill 1532, after a year's worth of research, meetings with stakeholders, public hearings and negotiations.

The plan hikes wages over a period of six years. The amount differs in each of three regions and is set according to a county's population, median income and cost of living. In Portland, minimum wage will reach \$14.75 in the Portland area, \$12.50

in rural and coastal counties with struggling economies and \$13.50 in the rest of the state by 2022.

The first pay bump starts in July, from \$9.25 to \$9.75 statewide.

President Obama on Wednesday commended the Oregon Legislature and Brown for approving the plan and called on Congress to follow suit. He said more than half of states now have wages higher than the federal minimum.

"Since I first called on Congress to increase the federal minimum wage in 2013, 18 states and the District of Columbia have acted on their own," Obama said in a statement.

"These efforts will boost the paychecks of hardworking Americans and help support millions of workers trying to make ends meet."

Brown said the plan would help the state avoid "a number of potentially problematic ballot measures."

It is still unclear whether all of the initiative campaigns are dead.

The Raise the Wage coalition announced Monday that it has suspended signature gathering to place a measure on the ballot to raise wages to \$13.50 statewide during a three-year period. That measure also would have lifted a ban on cities and counties setting higher wages. Chief sponsors said early in the campaign that the union-backed initiative was intended to spur the Legislature to action.

"While this proposal diverges from

our initial plan for raising the wage, it is overwhelmingly a win for Oregon workers — in large part because it gives a raise to over 100,000 minimum-wage workers this July," said Andrea Miller, executive director of Causa Oregon. "Most notably, this bill contains no carve-outs or exceptions for different classes of workers, like farmworkers or restaurant workers, or for people just starting out in their career."

The \$15 Now campaign is still an unknown.

"We are still in discussions with our partners of which there are many," said chief petitioner Jamie Partridge of Portland. "They are figuring out how to go forward. We are trying to determine our capacity to go to the ballot and wage a winning campaign."

The plan approved by the Legislature is "too low, too slow and too little, too late," Partridge said. "It's not enough to bring people out of poverty."

Anthony K. Smith, Oregon state director for the National Federation of Independent Business called on the governor to publicly oppose the \$15 Now campaign.

"It's bad enough that this unfortunate law will prompt small-business owners to halt hiring, start cutting back hours for workers, start eliminating overtime, or even make layoffs, but her silence on the ballot initiative only adds to the anxiety Oregon's entrepreneurs are already experiencing," Smith said in a statement.



BRIEFLY

DEQ director resigns amid outcry over toxic hot spots

SALEM (AP) — Gov. Kate Brown announced the resignation of the director of the Department of Environmental Quality.

Brown said Tuesday that Dick Pedersen is stepping down as Oregon's top environmental official for health reasons that she did not identify.

Pedersen's resignation comes amid a public outcry over discovery of hazardous levels of cadmium and arsenic near two glass-making facilities in Portland. Questions have been raised about whether the environmental agency took too long to respond to discovery of the toxic hot spots.

Pedersen has been with the agency for two decades and became director in 2008.

Deputy Director Joni Hammond will step in as interim director until a permanent replacement is named.

Oregon jobless rate falls to 5.1 percent; lowest since 2007

PORTLAND (AP) — The last time Oregon's unemployment rate was this low Apple had just released its first iPhone and the Portland Trail Blazers selected Greg Oden with the first overall pick in the NBA draft.

The state Employment Department said Tuesday that Oregon's unemployment rate for January fell to 5.1 percent, a level the state has not seen since June 2007.

Oregon's payroll report surged by nearly 10,000 jobs in January, the agency said, with four major industries leading the way: leisure and hospitality, construction, manufacturing, and professional business services.

Since January 2015, when the jobless rate was 5.9 percent, payroll employment has risen by almost 60,000 jobs.

"Oregon's labor market is as good as it was during

previous expansions," said Nick Beleiciks, state employment economist. "The unemployment rate is now lower than it was in most of the mid-2000s and nearly as low as in the mid-1990s. Oregon is adding jobs at a faster rate than during the mid-2000s, and the number of jobs added over the last year is on par with growth during the mid-1990s."

The state's jobless rate has been steadily declining since reaching a peak of nearly 12 percent in the spring of 2009, a time when it was reeling from the recession. Another month of strong job growth could push the rate to below 5 percent, a mark Oregon has not seen this century.

Another unemployment measure, known as U-6, sat at 10.3 percent in January — down from 12.4 percent a year ago. The figure includes discouraged workers who stopped looking as well as part-time workers who want but can't get full-time jobs.

Teen dies after fall at Cape Kiwanda; 5th death in 8 months

PORTLAND (AP) — Authorities say a 19-year-old man has become the fifth person to die in eight months at Oregon's Cape Kiwanda.

The Oregonian reports that Tillamook County Sheriff's Office says David Lopez of Woodburn drowned there Sunday.

Deputies say Lopez and two friends were climbing in an area known as the Punch Bowl when one of the men fell into the water. Lopez and the other friend fell while trying to help him.

Lopez's friends made it safely to shore.

Earlier this month, 17-year-old Megan Owens of Washington fell at Cape Kiwanda. She has not yet been found.

Sheriff Andy Long says most deaths in the area are teens and people in their 20s, usually from out of town. Deputies say Owens and Lopez both went around a fence to climb in the area.

UO president declines to renew contracts for 79 faculty

EUGENE (AP) — The University of Oregon will have fewer non-tenured faculty members next fall after its president declined to renew 79 contracts.

President Michael Schill issued the contract non-renewals Monday. The change is part of his larger effort to focus priorities like hiring 100 tenure-track faculty members over the next five years and making it easier for students to graduate on time, reported *The Register-Guard*.

All of the affected faculty members worked in the College of Arts and Sciences, and 60 percent of them were in the humanities, according to a memo from interim Dean Andrew Marcus. But officials said more job cuts are probably on the horizon.

"Other schools and colleges — like business and journalism — will be doing it in the future, I suspect," said university Provost Scott Coltrane on Tuesday.

The university also decided not to renew the contracts of six central office non-faculty employees.

Schill had expressed concern that departments were hiring non-tenure track faculty to teach while some tenured faculty had skimpy teaching loads.

Nathalie Hester, an associate professor of Italian and French, said departments like English and foreign languages seem to be the hardest hit. She expects that five to seven of her colleagues in the romance languages department won't be returning next year.

"There's a lot of apprehension and a lot of anxiety in our department," Hester said.

The school's faculty union, United Academics, supports the goal of increasing tenured faculty. But United Academics President Michael Dreiling said the cuts were too abrupt.

"By making these cuts all in one year, it leaves open the question of how are those programs going to deliver the high-quality undergraduate training that they're expected to deliver?" he said, suggesting a two- or three-year rollout would have given the departments more time to adjust.

Coltrane said the cuts weren't really abrupt because they'd been on the table for more than a year.

Corrections

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Copyright © 2016, EO Media Group

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
A passing morning shower	Partial sunshine	Mostly cloudy, showers around	Mostly cloudy, a shower or two	Clouds and sunshine
58° 37°	63° 48°	61° 47°	58° 37°	50° 34°
62° 34°	65° 45°	64° 47°	61° 36°	54° 36°

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
58°	37°
51°	32°
Normals	51° 32°
Records	69° (1931) 2° (1896)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.24"
Normal month to date	0.07"
Year to date	2.61"
Last year to date	1.55"
Normal year to date	2.62"

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

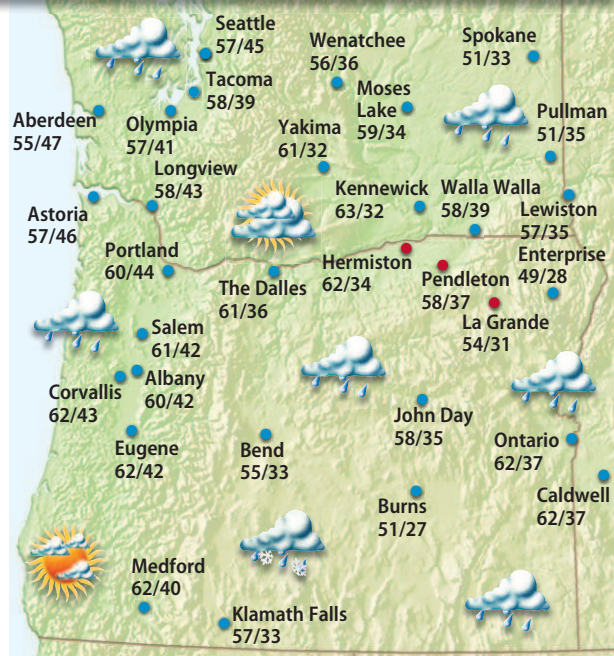
HIGH	LOW
56°	35°
Normals	53° 31°
Records	73° (1936) 10° (1993)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"
Month to date	0.11"
Normal month to date	0.07"
Year to date	1.60"
Last year to date	1.06"
Normal year to date	2.34"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:30 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:45 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:29 a.m.
Moonset today	12:11 p.m.



REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: More clouds than sun today; a couple of showers across the north.
Eastern Washington: Cloudy today. Snow, 1-3 inches in the mountains; a shower near the Idaho border. Clouds breaking across the south.
Cascades: A shower during the morning; otherwise, mostly cloudy today. Partly cloudy tonight.
Northern California: Mostly cloudy today; a couple of showers, except dry at the coast.
Western Washington: Mostly cloudy today with spotty showers. A passing shower in central parts tonight.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	57	46	sh	55	47	r
Baker City	54	30	c	57	41	pc
Bend	55	33	pc	59	43	pc
Brookings	59	47	c	60	50	c
Burns	51	27	c	53	33	pc
Enterprise	49	28	r	55	42	pc
Eugene	62	42	pc	63	48	c
Heppner	58	35	pc	61	44	pc
Hermiston	62	34	pc	65	45	pc
John Day	58	35	sh	63	50	pc
Klamath Falls	57	33	pc	54	39	pc
La Grande	54	31	r	60	47	pc
Meacham	51	31	r	57	44	pc
Medford	62	40	pc	63	44	c
Newport	57	48	c	58	50	r
North Bend	61	46	c	62	51	c
Ontario	62	37	c	64	47	pc
Pasco	63	34	pc	64	45	pc
Pendleton	58	37	c	63	48	pc
Portland	60	44	pc	59	48	r
Redmond	58	33	pc	62	40	pc
Salem	61	42	pc	61	47	r
Spokane	51	33	c	55	43	pc
Ukiah	53	30	r	59	43	pc
Vancouver	58	44	pc	57	47	r
Walla Walla	58	39	c	62	52	pc
Yakima	61	32	pc	60	41	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	66	33	pc	59	40	pc
Hong Kong	69	61	pc	71	64	c
Jerusalem	58	44	pc	60	44	s
London	49	37	c	46	34	sh
Mexico City	65	47	pc	63	41	sh
Moscow	32	27	c	36	33	sh
Paris	48	39	sh	47	33	sh
Rome	56	39	sh	57	47	pc
Seoul	54	41	pc	61	48	c
Sydney	86	70	s	85	70	s
Tokyo	58	45	s	57	48	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Friday
Boardman	WSW 4-8	NE 3-6
Pendleton	SW 4-8	S 6-12

UV INDEX TODAY

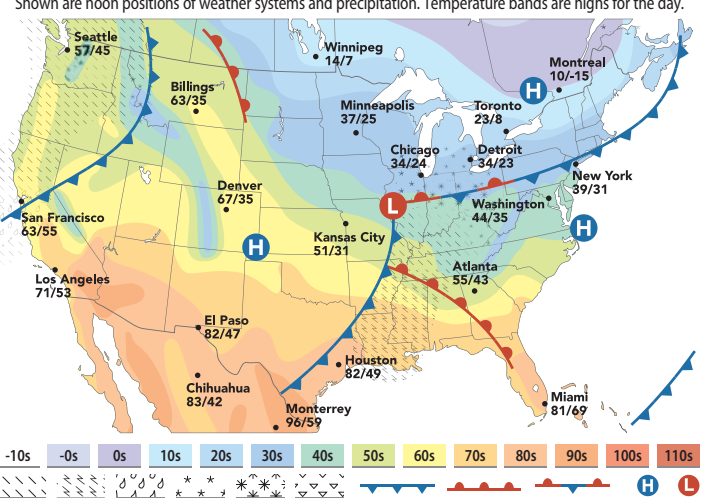
0	2	3	2	0	0
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8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme
The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



National Summary: Snow will spread eastward along the Interstate 70 and 80 corridors of the Midwest with rain and storms farther south today. Rain and mountain snow will begin to push well inland over the West.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 92° in Thermal, Calif. **Low -20°** in Crane Lake, Minn.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	72	41	pc	76	42	s
Atlanta	55	43	r	59	37	s
Atlanta City	38	31	pc	40	29	sn
Baltimore	40	31	pc	42	26	sn
Billings	63	35	pc	61	36	pc
Birmingham	53	43	r	58	36	s
Boise	61	40	c	64	49	pc
Boston	35	24	s	34	24	sn
Charleston, SC	65	48	s	64	41	pc
Charleston, WV	41	32	sn	45	27	c
Chicago	34	24	sn	37	31	pc
Cleveland	36	27	sn	34	23	pc
Dallas	73	43	s	73	49	