

# Courtney hesitant on minimum wage hike

Oregon's minimum wage increased 15 cents on Jan. 1. The new rate — \$9.25 per hour — remains the second-highest

in the nation, behind only our neighbor to the north, Washington. Yet several Oregon politicians already are ginning up support for a \$15 minimum wage.

We're pleased to read that Peter Courtney, president of the state Senate, is lukewarm to the idea. He cautioned fellow Democrats not to over-reach on the issue, saying it could jeopardize their party's new majority in Salem.

Courtney's advice is wise for more than reasons of political power. A sharp increase in the minimum wage in a state that is still recovering from a brutal recession is risky. There is scant evidence that such a boost would benefit the state or local economies.

The economic impact of hiking minimum wages is unclear. There are dozens of research papers on the subject. Their conclusions are conflicting.

Some argue that minimum wage increases boost consumer spending. Others say the impact is short-term, encouraging low-wage workers to take on more debt for big-ticket items such as cars.

Much depends on how employers would react to a large increase in the minimum wage. They could hire fewer workers. Or raise prices. Or lay off higher-paid employees. Again, economists disagree on the potential response.

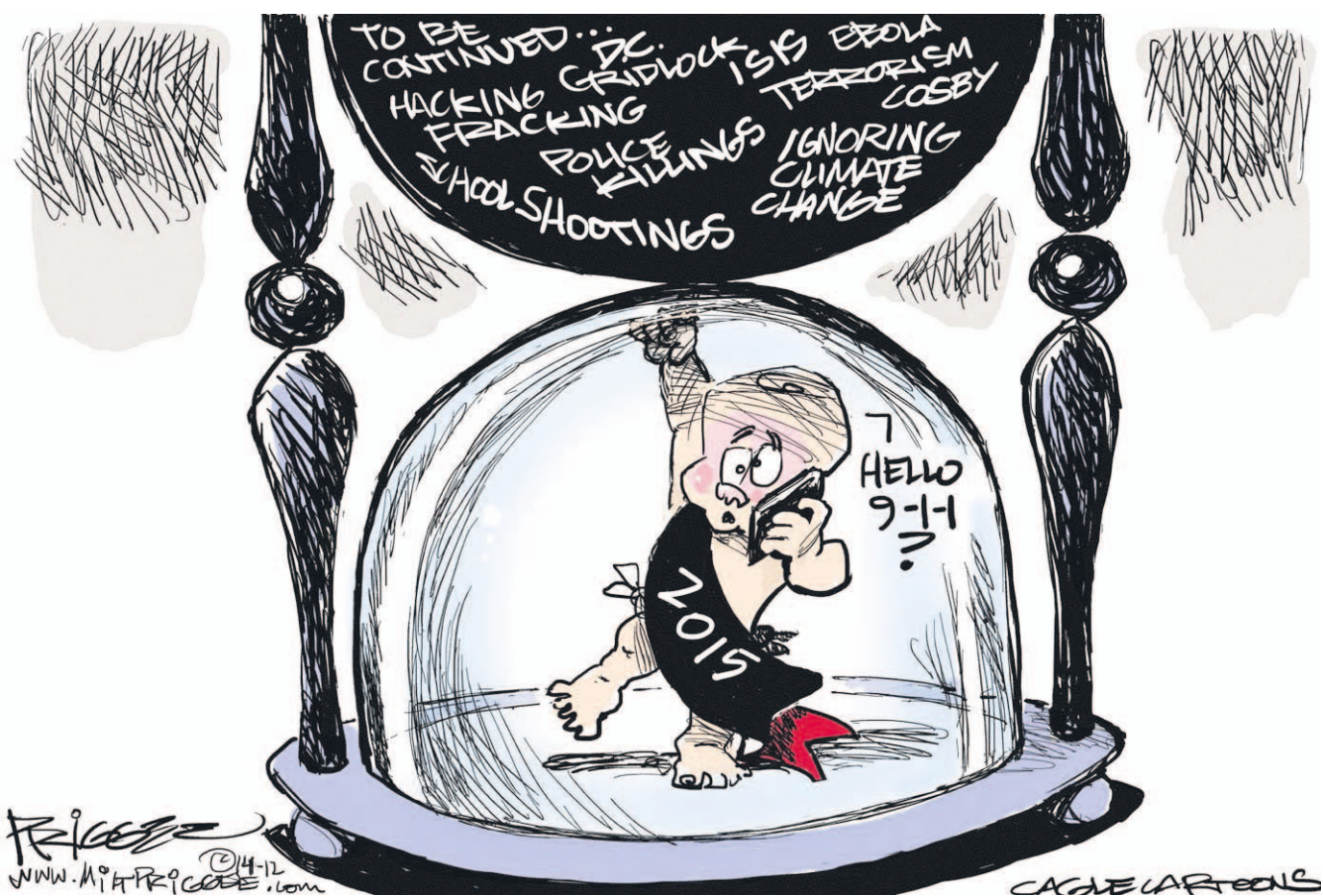
Oregon's minimum wage is adjusted each year for inflation. This has kept it at half the median hourly wage for all Oregon workers. That is a sound level for a wage for unskilled workers compared with employees with years of experience or specialized skills.

The \$15 minimum wage appears to be the new gold standard for activists, unions and others doing battle in the name of economic equality. The city of Seattle was the first to make the leap, though its city council tempered the impact by phasing the increase over several years. San Francisco soon followed suit.

Oregon legislators should at least wait to see how those jurisdictions fare under the \$15 minimum before following their lead. As Mark Twain said: "Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please."

## EDITORIAL

The voice of the Chieftain



## Justice jackpot for longhouse

I'm feeling pretty good about a new fund I've got set up for donating a little bit of money. Emphasis on little. But these particular funds were being relocated out of my bank account in a way that didn't seem right and I decided while trying to get them back that, if I succeeded, I'd send those dollars back out somewhere nice.

My phone company and I had a little disagreement last year about one of the finer points of our written agreement. They thought it would be fine to ignore what we agreed on and charge me more. I took the opposite stance. Fast-forward through a bunch of being on hold and getting nowhere, then an arbitration process arranged by the shockingly helpful folks at the Better Business Bureau. Turns out the arbitrator also knew how to read, so things went my way and I'm pleased to announce the Rombach vs. Big Wireless Provider Triumph For Justice Fund. Sadly, all that hassle amounts to only ten bucks a month. But it was the principle of the thing. And, hey, that's a hundred-something a year. Not to mention the fortune I'll save on blood pressure medication now that seeing my phone bill doesn't make steam whistle out my ears.

The first check is headed to the Homeland Project. They're close to going ahead on construction of a new longhouse that's been on the drawing board for years. The



### AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

3,200-square-foot spiritual and community gathering place will be at the site off Whiskey Creek Road, where Tamkaliks and the Friendship Feast happen each summer. Years ago I heard that thing about how if the whole world could sit down and eat dinner together we might just all get along. So that Friendship Feast and gathering always struck me as a fine thing.

This longhouse will go a long way toward furthering the Homeland Project goal of creating a place in the Wallowa country to celebrate Nez Perce traditions, where new generations of Nez Perce, local folks and visitors from all over the world can get together and get along. I think the world could probably use more of this type of thing.

So I'm dropping my little contribution into the bucket. It's a pretty good-sized bucket because this is going to be one spiffy longhouse. But the good news is that over 90% has been raised and there's a final push to collect about \$15,000 in matching funds so construction can get going.

I just wrote out my check for a hundred

bucks to the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, Inc., which is the super-long official name of the Homeland Project. Actually, I just abbreviated it to WBNPTIC. Much easier. See, giving is easy. So here's my plan. My check goes toward matching funds and if you match my match or come up with an even bigger match, then someone matches your match and so on, we put all these matches in a box and call it: The Strike Anywhere Fund. Brilliant, right? Because, you know, matches.

If you want to help ignite the Strike Anywhere Fund: Project Longhouse, you can get more specifics on the longhouse by shooting an email to tamkaliks@gmail.com or calling 541-886-3101. Both of those will reach Mary Hawkins. She's real nice. If you're ready to roll, you can mail your match to WBNPTIC: Strike Anywhere Longhouse Project, PO Box 15, Wallowa OR — Our Fair City — 97885. I would say to put a strike anywhere match inside the envelope, but I bet the postal service frowns on that.

Happy New Year to you. Hope 2015 is smooth and you never spend any time on hold waiting for customer service. That should go a long way toward promoting peace on earth.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist for the Chieftain and board member of the WBNPTIC.

## Role models in short supply

By Rocky Wilson

Let's face it, Martin Luther and Winston Churchill are dead, hence finding quality role models to look up to is daunting.

Fortunately, sports have been hammered into my soul forever, hence the overall genre from which to choose a role model significantly narrows the field.

Years back I watched O.J. run up and down a muddy field in Corvallis when his USC Trojans, rated No. 1 in the nation at the time, fell 3-0 to the Beavers. Simpson ran for more than 200 yards, yet never crossed the goal line nor flickered any inklings about becoming my role model. Shortly thereafter O.J. made big money hurdling turnstiles in airports, yet my resolve to aspire to someone greater prevailed. Not even the fact that my extremely old dictionary has a thumbnail photo of O.J. in it (and notes in its text that his football heroics were major) put me in O.J.'s camp.

As if he didn't get enough press running the football, Simpson next appealed to viewers around the world when cameras in helicopters captured him trying to elude the police at low speed on California freeways. I've often wondered how many bucks O.J. paid lawyers to get him out of that pickle.

Anyway, it didn't take me long to sur-



mise that O.J. is my anti-role model.

The antithesis of O.J., in my mind, is my all-time favorite sports figure, Bjorn Borg. On the tennis court, Borg was an exhibition of poetry in motion. He never lost his cool, simply wore out his opponents by methodically returning each and every shot returned to his side of the net, and consistently was smooth and fluid. A right hander, his two-handed backhand looked every bit as natural as his forehand and, if memory serves me, his comfort anywhere along the baseline was awesome.

A bucket list thing, I guess, I did see Borg play in person once later in his career during a professional exhibition match held in Portland. He wasn't much different then than the many times I'd watched him win Wimbledon and the French Open on television, though maybe the headband and wrist bands were different.

Other than Bjorn Borg, there haven't been many I've felt warmed enough by to consider being my role model.

My best sport, as a participant, was football. I was OK in high school, but probably my skills and definitely my body were not up to the challenge of college

football. A few memories, like playing one game at the University of San Quentin, never will be repeated nor forgotten, yet reality outweighed aspirations when a second shoulder surgery was required.

The closest to a role model I experienced in those days was a brash football-playing dude from the University of Alabama named Joe Namath. As quarterback for the fledgling New York Jets, on January 12, 1969, Namath — after guaranteeing a Jets win three days before squaring off against the heavily favored Baltimore Colts — backed his words by engineering a shocking victory.

But that role model thing faded quickly when Namath tried to expand his horizons as an actor. Simply stated, Joe was bad.

A piece of football trivia in regard to that Super Bowl III: Who was the Colt QB who came off the bench late in the game, when the Jets led 16-0, to drive the Colts to their solitary touchdown?

Sorry, I'm not going to make it easy on you, but I guarantee if you know anything at all about football that you'll recognize the name.

While you're googling the answer, feel free to check out Luther and Churchill: being dead doesn't erase one's achievements.

Jabberwock II columnist Rocky Wilson is a reporter for the Chieftain.

## Reader wishes new doctor well

To the Editor:

What a wonderful front-page story announcing Dr. Laurel Witt's arrival (the 12-31-14 edition).

I suspect all of Wallowa County is welcoming and wishing her a long, long career.

Given her background, there seems no doubt she will listen to patients'



stories and enjoy every moment, as she weaves health care into one of the most trusted of personal relationships.

We should recognize, however, that there will be a few cases (hopefully very rare) where she will no longer be of help to a patient, where one could say she would be at her "Witts end."

ps: Sorry; it's genetic!

M. Boyd Wilcox  
Corvallis

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