

Minimum wage plan better than the alternative

Politics is renowned for being the art of the possible. That is the most appropriate way of looking at the minimum wage law that Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed last Thursday.

The law — which schedules pay increases within three tiers of counties across the state — was designed to head off more extreme plans, such as the \$15 Now campaign. The new law lowers the wage threshold for businesses in counties outside the state's hottest economies. It also gives those businesses time to adjust.

Grant County and most Eastern Oregon counties are in the lowest tier. In July, the minimum wage across the state will move from \$9.25 to \$9.75. Then, Grant County's minimum wage will climb in steps, reaching \$12.50 over six years.

Negotiations over these tiers were done behind closed doors. There was no hearing to explain them. Paris Achen of our statehouse bureau reports that legislators looked "at how much was needed in each county to be self-sufficient. The research comes out of the University of Washington."

The Center for Women's Welfare at UW says that, "The

Self-Sufficiency Standard defines how much families need to meet basic needs without the help of public or private assistance."

So the price of housing is one of the major variants in separating Oregon counties. We still do not know precisely how legislators inside the room decided where to draw the line between the tiers. Legislative leaders should tell us about that.

For many Grant County small- and mid-sized business, paying a rising minimum wage will be a squeeze. It should be said, however, that the financial demand of the new law will be easier to bear than what was planned for the November ballot.

The chief petitioners of an initiative to raise the minimum wage to \$15 across the entire state in three years decided to end their campaign after the tiered plan was approved. Although many business owners may believe the tiered plan goes too far, it was certainly better than the alternative.

If you are a pragmatist and a realist, this was a decent outcome within Oregon's political climate.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Occupation condemnation

To the Editor:

Now we can get tough; now we are strong — now that it's over and all safe, let's be heroes. Let's come out now with a resolution of condemnation against the Malheur refuge occupation. It's easy, no confrontation, no argument from the arrested occupation protesters. Let's make them accountable.

Accountable: liable to be called to account; answerable; explicable — Syn. See responsible.

Now after the fact let's investigate the whole matter and demand responsibility, but what about our bravado, folks, in demanding an investigation into the Canyon Creek Complex fire? Let's ask for accountability now — after the fact. Stand up. Be heard.

When there's nothing to hide, all can be revealed quickly and easily. Maybe start with records of radio communications between on the site firefighters and command centers. If you want to know what happened in a battle, ask the front-line troops — not the generals — but maybe we don't want to bite that hand that feeds us!

P.S. If the county doesn't want to pay for investigation, let's get up a fund.

Michael R. Christensen
John Day

Peggy Gray will be hard to replace

To the Editor:

I was sorry to hear that our wonderful city manager, Peggy Gray, is retiring; she will be sorely missed and a challenge to replace. I first met Peggy about six years ago when I moved here. I was alarmed how dangerous the Trowbridge Gully crossing was, especially at night. I brought my concern to the city council; Peggy was instrumental in having reflectors installed almost immediately. Every time I cross the gully safely, I think fondly of Peggy Gray.

Richie Colbeth
John Day

'Electile Dysfunction'

To the Editor:

Some political figures and social bottom feeders should consider the threat of social censure for their actions by the people who voted them into office or allowed them to manipulate federal and state agency interaction and environmental collaboration. More often than not, rumors from the biased media and others striving for political or financial advancement are started by people who have no chance of competing with those targeted on level playing fields. Normal people don't attempt to destroy other people's lives. Those that do should be shunned by society, not elected to public office or placed

in critical public safety positions where their actions violate Oregon statutes — a process labeled as "Electile Dysfunction." Verbally orchestrated attacks on a popular and duly-elected constitutional sheriff can be tracked through federal, state, county and one city government as well as city/state law enforcement, the constitutionally ignorant or apathetic and those feeding off our failing economy or reaching for social notoriety. A local brainwashed county court-inspired crowd of alarmists were led to use biased media reporting on a neighboring refuge occupation and baseless court resolution as an open door for the attack on a law enforcement officer that the majority of Grant County residents duly elected. The politically driven Oregon Department of Justice and Department of Public Safety Standards and Training should recognize the affiliations and geographical locations of those people clamoring the loudest to replace our county law enforcement with a more "agency friendly" candidate. "Agency friendly" is one who will ignore your constitutional rights in favor of anti-constitutional federal laws supported by local governments that deny your rights of access to public lands and send minor infraction violators to Pendleton to pay exorbitant fines to the federal government. All Grant County's elected city councilmen and -women should have been included before the dictatorial county court made a decision that impacted all county citizens. These elected city officials have been ignored in their right and duty to defend their offices and an equal voice in residential government. To the cities within Grant County: Silence is consent.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

No individual is above the law

To the Editor:

Many are asking why on earth would anybody dare to call Sheriff Palmer to task for his actions? The answer is that no one individual or group should consider themselves above the law, especially an elected law enforcement official who has been entrusted with all of his constituents' safety, not just those who happen to have the same opinions and political viewpoints.

There is an atmosphere of distrust for government and public officials in this country. There are quotes such as "I have a pen and a phone." Sound familiar? It's not much different on many local levels, such as right here in Grant County. Our sheriff has repeatedly refused to work with others, even though they have their own realms of authority and responsibilities. This has cost our county dearly, financially and otherwise. Like it or not, we all need to work together.

Consorting with and encouraging the militia members while

Sheriff Palmer was on duty created an unacceptable conflict of interest between his duties as our sheriff and his role as a private citizen. They broke the law, regardless of how noble their cause may be perceived to be by some. If I were to rob a bank with the intention of giving the money to charity, that still makes me a bank robber. The fact remains that the moment they took possession of the wildlife refuge, they became criminals.

One of the very basic premises I learned as a grade school kid in Burns was that we are a nation of laws. If those that are sworn to uphold those laws bend or break them by consorting with known law-breakers, they are no longer qualified to hold such a high degree of responsibility.

The true heroes are the individuals who showed enough strength of character to do the right thing, in the face of ugliness and threats. These people are bound by their oaths and consciences to uphold the rule of law, and if they don't report unlawful behavior, regardless of who, when or why, then they are derelict in their duty to the public they serve.

Dan E. Maynard Jr.
John Day

Was fire investigation too much to ask?

To the Editor:

The Blue Mountain Eagle, March 2, 2016, cited cost, duration and objectivity as reasons for the Grant County Court denying an investigation into the initial Mason Spring and Berry Creek fires that became the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

Cost: The court did not check nor ask about what the investigation would cost. Would \$5,000 as an estimate be too much for the \$50 million-plus the county has and in view of the many millions the fire has cost citizens in losses?

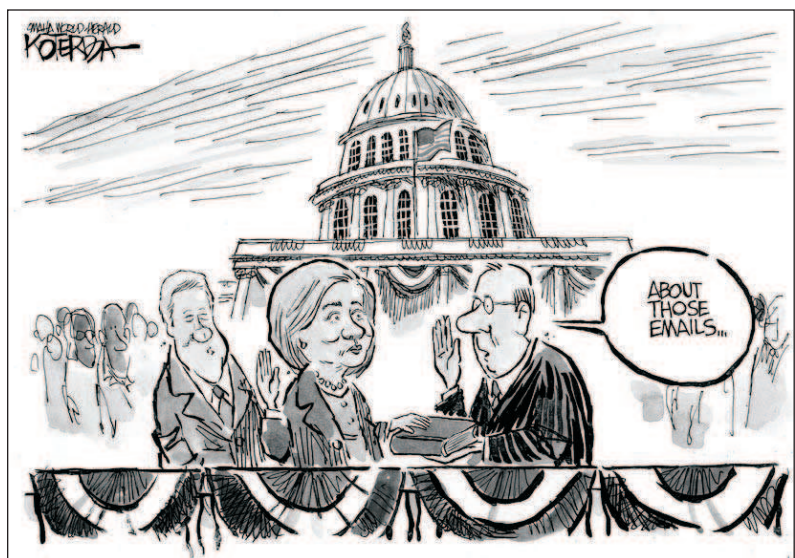
Duration: What has that got to do with anything? A few weeks, perhaps months, maybe next week. Duration?

Objectivity: Simple. Citizens want to know why two small fires in two days time were not put out. Is that too much to ask given the devastation that occurred and the danger Canyon City and John Day will be facing in potential flooding?

Finally, the Circuit Court room was packed and meeting held there because the first two attempts for the fire investigation had people in the hallways and not able to squeeze in the County Court room. The Circuit Court room was not filled up because of the refuge resolution as the Eagle intimated. It was the fire investigation that brought so many people out.

Ken Moore
Mt. Vernon

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WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflong-creek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: monument@oregontrail.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
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- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

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- **U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R** — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.
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