

Five bills in Salem that could impact your life and your wallet

No matter who you are, no matter what your political party, there will be five weeks in Salem this year that could affect your life and pocketbook for years to come.

Oregon's 2016 legislative session is under way and is set to tackle some huge issues. Once a bill is passed and the governor signs it, it's out of our hands and in your laps.

Let's consider a few of these issues: Minimum wage, increasing corporate taxes and the continued sorry condition of our roads and transportation infrastructure. They are interconnected.

A tangential issue is affordable housing. Despite all the attention devoted to Portland's housing problems, it is a problem in many parts of the state. (Pendleton now has a commuter culture.) Like family-wage jobs, affordable housing cannot be created by simply having the legislature pass a bill.

It's no secret that America's middle class is diminishing. With the loss of the timber industry, you could say Oregon has been one of the leaders in losing family-wage jobs. The state has yet to successfully replace the jobs we lost.

Now here we are in 2016 pinning too many hopes on an increase in the minimum wage. Could it help some people? Yes, but in a small, temporary

GUEST COLUMN
STATE SEN.
BETSY JOHNSON



'Increasing the price of fuel and electricity will hardly help Oregonians — especially those living on minimum wage.'

way. Most employers are not fat cats. They will pass on the costs through higher prices on goods and services. A new, higher minimum wage will not go as far as supporters claim. It will not translate into family-wage jobs.

Nevertheless, there's a famous rule in politics that says you never vote against a minimum wage in an election year. Gov. Kate Brown has put forth a compromise proposal to gradually increase the minimum wage, and vary it according to the cost of living in the Portland metro area vs. elsewhere.

Her plan would eventually increase today's minimum wage of \$9.25 an hour to \$14.50 in the Portland area and \$13.25 everywhere else by 2022. The first raise would take effect in July when both the Portland and statewide rates would rise to \$9.75. After the top rate is reached in 2022, future increases would be indexed to inflation.

Like all compromises, everybody gets a little bit of what they want, and nobody gets everything. The alternative to Brown's compromise is a ballot measure that, if passed, would almost immediately jump the top minimum wage to \$15. It would be a knockout punch to some businesses.

That's not an exaggeration when you consider that lawmakers may face another ultimatum: Measure 28 raising the corporate minimum taxes on gross receipts. If the legislature doesn't pass it, supporters promise to place it on the ballot.

It's popular to attack anything corporate, but corporations are not the enemy. Corporations employ thousands of people in Oregon. If you have a retirement plan, whether through the public or private sector, you may need corporate profits to bring you a return on your investments. In economics, so much is interrelated.

I know it's outrageous to read about the excessive salaries of some members of the corporate echelon. Measure 28 doesn't target them. The public sparring over Measure 28 has already begun with some opponents calling it a hidden sales tax. Others have dubbed it the PERS tax, because they assume the money is intended to pay for public employee pensions.

Voters are understandably distrustful. State government has made some costly mistakes ranging from Cover Oregon to the current investigation into the Department of Energy for allegedly price-fixing business energy tax credits.

It will be tough for many voters to find time to study the fine print of Measure 28, and it will be impossible for Oregon legislators to do justice to this complicated subject in a five-week session. If we are going to re-write tax policy, we better get it right. Sometimes we no sooner pass legislation into law, and the misgivings start.

Remember what happened last year? The legislature passed a "Ban the Box" law restricting employers from asking job applicants about their criminal histories. Now this year we are confronted with the news that the entire staff at Give Us This Day, a Portland foster care facility, had crim-

inal records. It's enough to make you wonder why we needed Ban the Box.

Then there's last year's major disappointment — a failure to develop a statewide transportation package to repair crumbling roads. Taxing everyone for road improvements is fair. What isn't fair is hitting ordinary citizens twice as hard, and that's what would have happened without a repeal of the low-carbon fuel standard.

Reducing the amount of carbon allowed in fuel will increase the price of gasoline. It will unfairly hit lower-income people by forcing them to subsidize the owners of electric cars and plug-in hybrids. A repeal of the low-carbon fuel standard would have signaled a willingness to compromise on a transportation package.

It didn't happen. A transportation package may remain illusive for another year. Worse, environmental groups are now demanding the legislature phase out all power produced by coal, inside or outside of Oregon, and replace it with more costly options that may not significantly benefit the environment.

Increasing the price of fuel and electricity will hardly help Oregonians — especially those living on minimum wage.

LETTERS

Council playing fast and loose with regulations

The question of whether or not Jeff Nicholson should be allowed to proceed with his Planned Unit Development (PUD) on North Laurel has been ongoing since late 2014. The Cannon Beach Planning Commission has now recommended denial three times!

In February 2015, the Cannon Beach City Council ignored Planning Commission's 6-1 denial vote and preliminarily approved the development. Last month, the Planning Commission was asked again to determine if the application is complete and conforms to the rules and zoning requirement for PUD's. The commission again ruled (unanimously 6-0) that the application was NOT complete, does NOT conform to current laws and does NOT meet the clear requirements for PUD's. Their objections were numerous: Mr. Nicholson has not provided a required performance bond, he has not established a required Homeowners Association to maintain the 125 foot long, 10 foot tall concrete retaining wall, driveway, or shared common spaces; he has not

provided required detailed building plans for any of the four houses; he has not provided a required detailed landscape plan; he has not provided required building elevations; one vague note plans one house to violate the maximum elevation permitted; and he has not provided a final geotech report, a vitally important part of developing the steeply sloped land.

This is not just a neighborhood issue; it is a blatant disregard for the never-used-before city codes for Planned Unit Developments and zoning regulations already in existence in Cannon Beach. It would set a dangerous precedent for the city not to enforce its codes, as they exist, to ignore the recommendations of its Planning Commission and to allow this developer to proceed when any other developer would have to conform to existing laws. You may be weary of hearing about this issue as it has been ongoing for many months, but just know your City Council is playing fast and loose with the regulations that are in place to protect you and your neighborhood, and that you look away at your own peril.

If you wish to participate in decisions regarding future development

in Cannon Beach, you can make your voice heard by attending the City Council meeting on March 1 when the council will make its final ruling whether or not this project can go forward. Please support the efforts to have this application denied, either by speaking up or by submitting your testimony in writing prior to that date. The Planning Commission has again done their due diligence and their opinion should not be marginalized by the City Council. This is a vital issue for our beautiful city and all its concerned residents.

Lucinda Hayes
Cannon Beach

Planning Commission has strayed with actions

I have visited Cannon Beach with my family for decades, as it is our favorite place to go for our vacations and long weekends. As I have been in the building industry for much of my career I have followed, with great interest, Mr. Nicholson's almost two-year battle to gain legal approval to build modest homes within the established character of the neighborhood.

I watched with amazement the Jan. 28 City of Cannon Beach Plan-

ning Commission meeting as the commissioners showed what appeared to be complete contempt for the laws of the State of Oregon, the building code of the city, and the professional staff of Cannon Beach. The Planning Commission at that meeting had one duty in the matter, to verify that the final plan was substantially similar to the preliminary plan, which had been previously approved by the city council, and later upheld by the State of Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. The commissioners did not even acknowledge, let alone perform, their clearly defined duty and instead took it upon themselves to debate a ruling by the State of Oregon LUBA, as if LUBA has no jurisdiction over the Planning Commission. The commissioners continued down their rabbit trail by deciding to unilaterally change the City's Building Codes by trying to assert themselves as an impromptu Design Review Board for Mr. Nicholson's plan.

I love Cannon Beach and I truly believe that it is worth defending. However, the actions of the Planning Commission have strayed very far from defending the wonderful charm of Cannon Beach, devolving into a

witch-hunt unbecoming of such a wonderful community.

Dave Fitzhugh
Oregon City

Support refuges

I'm writing to express my support for the people of Harney County, the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, as well as our local Haystack Rock, which itself is part of the Oregon Island National Wildlife Refuge.

In Southeastern Oregon, armed outsiders advocating for their own selfish agenda have overtaken the county, the people of Burns and the refuge for several weeks now. The lives of the citizens have been seriously disrupted. Financial damages mount. The uniqueness of that refuge is being trashed daily.

Clatsop is a rural, though coastal, county. Imagine the chaos that would ensue in our communities if an armed group overtook Cannon Beach and the Rock. It is not that far-fetched. Who thought a group such as Bundy and company would set up housekeeping at the Malheur Refuge?

National wildlife refuges belong to all Americans.

Melissa Cadwallader
Cannon Beach

FOCUS on PREPAREDNESS

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A MAJOR DISASTER?



The City of Cannon Beach and Oregon Office of Emergency Management are hosting a free event on March 3rd to help you get READY!

PRESENTERS & TOPICS

Brant Kucera,
City Manager/Emergency Manager: *The City Emergency Management Program: Community READY.*

Althea Rizzo,
Oregon Office of Emergency Management: *Update on Cannon Beach Hazards and How to be READY.*

Mayor Sam Steidel: *How to be READY with your Go-Bags.*

Lila Wickham,
Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator: *Cannon Beach Medical Reserve Corps: Response and READINESS.*

LOCATION: Chamber of Commerce
207 N Spruce Street,
Cannon Beach, Oregon

TIME: 5:30 -7:00 pm

**For more information or questions contact:
Colleen Riggs at riggs@ci.cannon-beach.or.us**

FORUM IS FREE

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