

**WALDEN:**  
Talk ranged from energy to housing

*Continued from page 1*

that he was visiting not to talk about his work but to hear from constituents.

"I'm actually here to listen and learn," he said.

Since he was being hosted by airport owners Julie and Benny Benson, who also operate ENERGYneering Solutions, Inc., Walden heard first a good bit of input on the need for consistent support for renewable energy.

David Wentworth, of Evensol, which is affiliated with ENERGYneering Solutions, noted that, "People should think of renewable energy as an infrastructure project" that should be "blind to politics."

Walden said that "the real debate is how far does the government put their finger on the scale?"

The congressman also acknowledged real concerns about the vulnerability of the electrical grid and the value of distributed energy and individual energy sources — local infrastructure that Sisters Country firms are capable of developing.

"We could probably power the whole town with renewable energy," Benny Benson noted.

Attendees also briefed Walden on the Outlaw Aviation program that is helping high school students make real strides toward careers in aviation.

The conversation turned to one of the major concerns in the Sisters community: the availability — or lack thereof — of rental and workforce housing. That is perceived as an impediment to the economic development of the area.

Benson noted that his company is growing and employing more young engineers and mechanics, but "we



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Rep. Greg Walden visited with locals at Sisters Airport last week.

fight, a bit, the rental market." Walden asked, "What constrains that?"

City Manager Andrew Gorayeb replied that "capital availability is definitely a little bit of a challenge."

Gorayeb said, "We've got property here in town ready to be developed for multifamily ... there's no capital falling from the sky available to develop those dwellings."

Walden noted that he hears from bankers that they are lending money and from communities that capital availability is a problem. He hopes to look into the question.

"How do you put those two together?" he said.

Gorayeb is anticipating a growing strain on local infrastructure.

"The exodus from California is going to be bigger than people realize," he said. "We're going to be challenged with infrastructure ... we're going to see a lot more bodies."

As talk turned back to education, Steve Marsan, of Innovator Flight Science, which recently located at the airport, noted a need for

practical skill development. For example, welders are in constant high demand.

Walden recalled the shop programs that used to be a fixture of high schools.

"That all kind of got wiped out," he said. "If you had a welding program at the high school, I don't know if that would solve it, but it's a start."

The congressman emphasized the need for public/private partnerships to fill educational gaps. That's a concept Sisters embraces. Wentworth noted the guitar-building program at Sisters High School, which is a partnership with Sisters Folk Festival. Students learn advanced skills, including computer-assisted design.

"At the high school they've got those kids building guitars," he said. "They're not building birdhouses. There's some real skills being developed over there."

Walden concluded his visit with a tour of the airport facilities, which continue to see upgrades as it becomes an economic hub for the community.

**CERTAIN AGE:**  
No COLA means adjusting the budget

*Continued from page 18*

But in the past decade, the COLA has been that big only once.

The five times I did receive a small COLA, it basically covered the increase in my Medicare Part B premium for outpatient care. When that doesn't happen, a long-standing federal "hold harmless" law protects the majority of beneficiaries (70 percent) from having their Social Security payment reduced because of increased insurance premiums and no COLA.

However, there are 30 percent of Medicare beneficiaries who do have to pay an increased premium that would otherwise be spread among the full 100 percent. Higher premiums (up \$54) will be paid by 2.8 million new beneficiaries, and 1.6 million, whose premiums are not deducted from their Social Security payment. 3.1 million people with higher incomes, many of whom already pay higher premiums, could see large increases. For those with incomes above \$214,000 a year, premiums next year could exceed \$500 a month, up from about \$335.

States' budgets will also be impacted because they pay part of the Medicare premiums for about 10 million low-income beneficiaries.

There is pressure being brought to bear in Washington, D.C. urging Congress to protect all retirees from dramatic increases in Medicare costs. With the continual logjam in Congress, it seems unlikely they will be able to compromise or enact any legislation.

In the absence of legislative action, the White House could choose to do one of several things. It could authorize the big increase in Medicare premiums for the 30 percent (15 million). Or it could authorize the secretary of health and human services to take money from the Medicare contingency reserve, which acts as backup in case actual spending is higher than projected. Unfortunately, that fund is already lower than the level recommended by Medicare actuaries.

Whatever action is taken or not taken will be reflected in my first 2016 Social Security check, and I may have to amend my budget for the coming year.

NuggetNews.com  
is your online source for  
Breaking News  
Classifieds | Weather

**TREATING SPORTS INJURIES**  
Children & Adults

**Three Sisters Chiropractic**  
270 S. Spruce St., Sisters  
Dr. Inice Gough, DC, 541.549.3583  
ThreeSistersChiropractic.com

**GET READY FOR WINTER TRAVEL**  
Tires, Suspension, Brakes & Alignment

**DAVIS TIRE** 541-549-1026  
Serving Sisters Since 1963.  
188 W. Sisters Park Dr. In Sisters Industrial Park across from SnoCap Mini Storage

**THE PORCH**

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!  
**OCTOBER IS ITALIAN MENU MONTH**  
Serving up seriously good Italian food  
Come taste what everyone is talking about!  
541-549-EATS (3287)  
Fri.-Tues., 5 p.m. to close  
243 N. Elm St. Sisters  
Walk-ins welcome! f

**SISTERS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**

**Thrift Store**

**Halloween is 1/2 PRICE!**  
Outfit not fitting?  
Come on down!

541-549-1740  
141 W. Main Ave., Sisters  
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday, 12-4 p.m.  
Donations accepted  
Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

**ReStore**

We are getting ready to transform the upstairs into a winter wonderland, so **EVERYTHING UPSTAIRS IS 60% OFF**

Whoa Nellie! That's some serious savings!

541-549-1621  
254 W. Adams Ave., Sisters  
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday, 12-4 p.m.  
Donations accepted  
Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Hope for a child. Change for a nation.

\$35 a month. All the difference in the world.  
Sponsor a Ugandan child with a local organization at  
**HopeAfricaKids.com**

**HOPE**

This ad sponsored by The Nugget Newspaper.