

# Sen. Wyden ‘listens to the future’

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) engaged in a wide-ranging question-and-answer event with 60 Sisters High School juniors and seniors at a “Listening to the Future” session on Friday, April 27.

Wyden, who was here for a series of nine town hall meetings throughout the state, made a special point of coming to Sisters after four SHS girls who made a trip to Washington D.C. in March had been unable to meet at length with him due to his attendance at committee meetings in D.C. (See story on page 1.)

He told the students he started the listening series in 2013 when the government had been shut down. He likened the Senate at that time to “people acting like children arguing over the sand box.”

“I’m going to go home to talk to some adults in Oregon – high school juniors and seniors,” he reported saying.

He started the Friday session telling the students, “This is time for you to educate me. I’m so proud of the Sisters students. It’s important to have the information come from the bottom up.” He encouraged them to get involved and speak out. Wyden assured the students no question was off limits.

After some shy hesitation from the crowd, the first question came from a young man who asked the Senator, “At what point did you know you wanted to be a Senator?”

Wyden’s response was very personal, saying he was “dribbling my way through life” with dreams of being an NBA basketball player. Lacking the necessary height and speed, that dream faded, but while working at a senior citizen lunch program, he was encouraged by the people he helped to run for Congress. He became the youngest person from Oregon to be elected to Congress, and he became an advocate for the poor elderly.

The students went on to cover the waterfront with their questions: mental health; gun violence; school funding; climate change; immigration and DACA; tax reform; military spending; leadership; net neutrality; environmental protection; foreign policy regarding South and North Korea and Syria; and affordable college.

One student wanted to know what had been the reactions from other Senators to the student walkouts following the Parkland shooting.

“They are waiting to see how much grassroots change is going to take place (on the state level). I think many of them are on the fence, watching. That is why we have to push so hard right now (on gun violence),” Wyden told the students.

In response to an inquiry about funding for Oregon schools, Wyden explained that the Federal government owns a large portion of the state due to national forest land and BLM lands. Because of that, the timber on those lands can’t be sold to fund schools like in other states where more timber is in private hands. Wyden is currently working on a bill titled Secure Rural Schools that would provide additional Federal funds for schools in states like Oregon where the U.S. government owns much of the land.

Several students asked questions regarding mental-health issues, some in connection to gun violence. Wyden cautioned the students to not fall into the trap of the “created false dichotomy.” He said the two topics are not an either/or situation but rather, both issues must be addressed.

Wyden shared his own personal story about his brother Jeffrey who “died way too young,” after experiencing schizophrenia. He told the students that not enough is done for those with mental-health issues because they have no political power, no money, and no political

action committee.

Wyden believes requiring background checks before any gun purchase in the U.S., with no exceptions, would be a watershed moment. He would like to see the restriction placed on bump-stocks. However, he thinks getting an outright ban on all assault rifles is “a heavy lift.”

“Your generation will not accept gun violence anymore... We can’t allow mass shootings in schools to become the norm,” he said.

The Senator was clear he does not support the administration’s proposal to include a question regarding citizenship on the 2020 census.

“We are a better, freer, stronger nation because of legal immigration. I am in favor of justice for the DACA children. I think it’s outlandish to spend \$33 billion on a wall,” Wyden said. “However, we will compromise in order to get justice for DACA.”

In response to Wyden’s question asking if 16-year-olds should be able to vote, the students were about equally divided in the affirmative and negative responses.

Wyden encouraged the students to think locally and act locally to bring about change. He told them to engage with local businesses about where their energy comes from. Start conversations on issues and share knowledge and opinions, he told the students.

“Members of Congress are trying to read whether young people are going to participate in the government. Are they going to stay involved?” he said.

“This is your generation, your time as it relates to personal safety. We can’t just sit by and do nothing,” Wyden reminded the students. “There wasn’t a bad question in the house. I am walking out of here feeling the students are going to lead the way. This conversation is not ended — to be continued.”

# Outlaws runners pushed to excellent times

By Charlie Kanzig  
Correspondent

Three Outlaws ventured to Jesuit High School last Friday, as invited guests for one of the most high-powered track meets in Oregon, the Nike/Jesuit Relays.

Distance runners Jordan Pollard (1,500 meters), Anna Bartlett (1,500), and Kate Bowen (3,000), got to line up against other accomplished runners from throughout the Northwest, and the high quality of the competition led to some blistering times, including one school record.

Pollard found himself in the middle of a field of runners that all had top credentials in the 1,500, and he stayed in the hunt throughout the race, finally finishing fourth with a personal best of 4:01.76, the fastest time this year among

4A runners by over 6 seconds. The winner, Andrew Payton of Tualatin, finished in 4:00.26, as 26 runners finished under 4:10.

Bartlett also got pulled to a personal best in her 1,500 race, lowering her career time by 5 seconds to 5:00.97.

Then, it was Bowen’s turn to shine. The sophomore went out hard and held on to place 10th, totally demolishing the previous Sisters High School record held by Aria Blumm, with a time of 10:19.88. The previous mark stood at 10:43.01. Bowen is ranked second among 4A runners in Oregon behind senior Linnea Kavulich of Scappoose, who finished ahead of Bowen at the meet with a time of 10:05.46.

“These races give our distance kids a real chance to meet their potential,” said Coach Josh Nordell. “You can’t run that fast by yourself.”



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