

Smith vows 'turnaround year'

■ Sen. Gordon Smith continues his campaign, promising a better future for Oregon's timber industry and overall economy

By Jeremy Lang
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., fresh off his one-on-one with President George W. Bush, told the Associated Oregon Loggers convention Friday that he's optimistic about their chances — and his chances — of coming out on top in 2002.

Smith, the keynote speaker for the 32nd annual convention, said Bush's Republican administration will give him "the opportunity to be on the offensive" for the first time since taking office in 1997.

He said the offensive push to improve Oregon's economy will favor the timber industry, and loggers should be as optimistic as he is that 2002 will be a "turnaround year" for the industry and the entire state.

"For a decade now, we've taken advantage of natural resources," Smith said. "We've put all our eggs in the high-tech basket."

Bush visited Oregon on Jan. 5, his first return since the 2000 campaign, and Smith accompanied the president on Air Force One and in limousines. He told the 200-plus attendees at the convention that Bush showed an aggressive resolve to help struggling Oregon loggers and farmers.

"I saw a man genuinely aggrieved," Smith said of Bush. "I saw him give very clear directions (to his advisers) to get this fixed, doggone it."

The convention took place at the Eugene Hilton, and the atmosphere contrasted the atmosphere during a University conference on natural resources. Historically, when timber conferences come to the Uni-



Thomas Patterson Emerald

Sen. Gordon Smith mingles with constituents after his speech at the Associated Oregon Loggers 2002 annual convention at the Eugene Hilton on Friday morning.

versity, they focus on preservation and conservation, with student groups such as Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group vocally and frequently sounding the rallying cry. But Smith faced no opposition Friday speaking to a group that showed its Republican colors numerous times.

Association President Mark Crawford, who opened the event, said he agreed that the Executive Branch will correct the "awful policies" passed by former President Bill Clinton's administration.

"I'm sure we are all relieved to have the past year behind us. ... Thank God for George Bush."

Smith is running for re-election in November, and the question-and-answer session that followed his speech seemed like a campaign stop. Audience members wearing work shirts, suspenders and baseball caps questioned the suit-clad senator on a variety of issues that

analysts believe will define the midterm elections, from terrorism to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's, D-S.D., role in the deadlock on economic stimulus.

"Daschle blamed the recession more on the dot-coms than the Bush tax cut. When George Bush took his oath of office, we were in a recession."

Democrats currently hold a one-seat majority in the Senate, and Smith said races such as his could decide who controls the agenda for the next two years. Smith called his likely Democratic contender, Secretary of State Bill Bradbury, a "credible opponent" who will run an "aggressive, well-funded campaign."

"If we defend seats like mine, we'll take back the Senate," Smith said. "If you'd like to keep with the ear of the president of the U.S., I'm your candidate."

Smith said he plans to stop at the University during his campaign.

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