

Merkley focuses on Oregon, postpones decision on 2020 bid

By Andrew Selsky
The Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Sen. Jeff Merkley, one of the most vocal critics of President Donald Trump’s immigration policies, seemed content to meet with constituents in Oregon and did not say if he’ll run for president in 2020.

Merkley has been postponing a decision on a White House bid for some time. Last year, he said he’d decide soon after the November midterm election. Now, he says he’ll decide before the end of this first quarter.

Nine Democrats have declared their intentions to run – the most recent was Sen. Kamala Harris from California.

“One every day,” Merkley said with a grin during an interview Monday before

he hosted a town hall in a community college in Salem, Oregon’s capital city.

Deciding whether to run is a gamble as Merkley faces an ever-expanding field of Democrats and would have to abandon the option of being elected to the Senate for a third term — unless the Oregon Legislature changes the law.

Merkley gained some name recognition nationally last June, when he tried to enter a federal facility in Texas where immigrant children were being held. An aide videotaped the scene as he was refused entry and police were called. The video quickly gained over 1 million views in a day, and was repeated in newscasts across the country.

At a town hall Monday, Merkley — wearing jeans, cowboy boots and a work

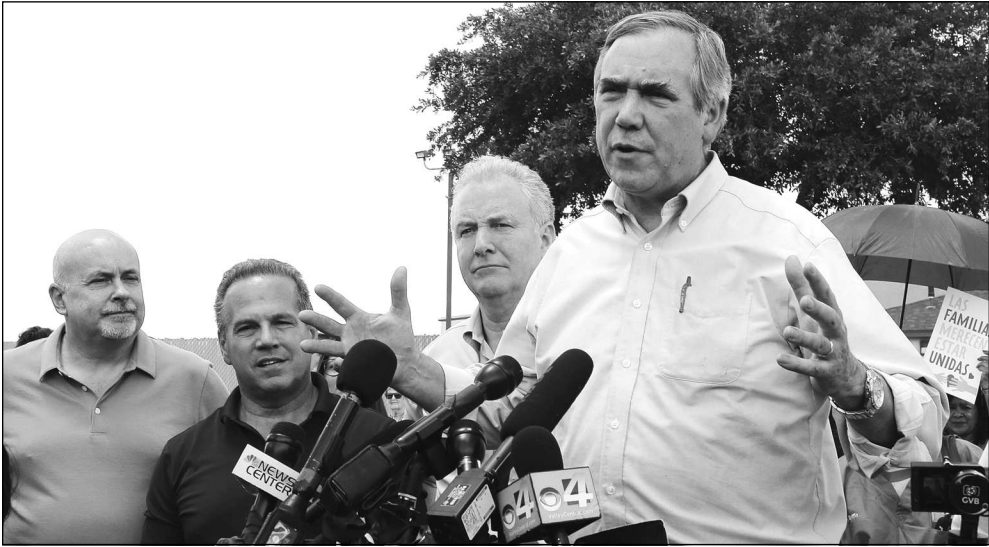
shirt — described his efforts to stop the internment of immigrant children, including through his introduction of the “No Internment Camps Act.”

The Oregon Democrat said it was “spooky” that in this era, legislation in America would have internment camps in its title.

Merkley, the son of a millwright, was first elected to the Senate in 2008 and handily won re-election six years later.

Asked if he might prefer to be in the Senate if Democrats gain control in 2020, Merkley said: “Well I tell you, I’ve been in the majority, and I’ve been in the minority, and the majorities are better.”

He said senators have a huge ability to influence the direction of policy, even if they’re not the chair of a



U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., speaks to the media in front of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Rio Grande Valley Sector’s Centralized Processing Center in McAllen, Texas on June 17, 2018.

committee or subcommittee. Merkley is a member of the appropriations committee; the environment and public works committee; the foreign relations committee and the budget committee.

Merkley, to support Democratic candidates for other offices in key states, has hired field staff in states such as Iowa and New Hampshire. They could also assist in laying the ground-

work for a presidential run. He has already visited Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada, states that have early primaries and caucuses in the presidential sweepstakes.

Oregon bottle redemption rate reaches 90 percent

WesCom News Service

BEND — The Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, which oversees the state’s bottle deposit program, says about 90 percent of the containers covered by the plan were returned and redeemed in 2018.

That’s a jump of around 25 percent over where the figure stood just two years ago.

The Bulletin reports Oregonians recycled around 2 billion containers last year, the most ever under the program.

Joel Schoening, community relations manager for the cooperative, attributed the uptick primarily to two

recent efforts to revamp the state’s bottle redemption program: dramatically expanding the types of containers included in the program and raising the deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents in April 2017.

“That dime did what it was supposed to,” Schoening said.

Additionally, the cooperative announced the number of BottleDrop accounts increased by 50 percent last year, with about 300,000 households now enrolled in the program.

In part because of this increase in participation, Schoening said the cooperative is looking at adding

more BottleDrop redemption centers across the state.

“What we’re seeing is that people are driving farther to return their bottles than they are to buy them,” Schoening said.

When the Oregon bottle bill passed in 1971, it added a 5-cent deposit to the sale of every bottle and can of beer, soda and similar beverages sold in Oregon, which could be redeemed by returning the bottle.

In 2016, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission announced the deposit would be increased to 10 cents, after redemption rates fell below the levels set by

the Legislature. The change occurred in April 2017, and the redemption rate spiked from 59 percent to 82 percent for the rest of the year.

Another major change occurred at the beginning of last year, when the state expanded its list of acceptable containers to include energy drinks, juice, coffee, tea and other beverages. Schoening said the raw totals of redeemed containers predictably spiked after the change, but he said the redemption rate increased despite the volume of new recyclables, a sign that more Oregonians bought into the program.



Sean Lewis of Bend works on recycling some of his cans and bottles at the BottleDrop Redemption Center in Bend.

INLAND

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The fire didn’t spread into the dining area, but smoke and water damage was extensive there, Hensley said.

Fire cause

Baker City Fire Chief John Clark said the fire was accidental and started in a swamp cooler on the restaurant’s roof.

He said it’s not clear whether the cooler, which is about five years old, had a mechanical or electrical

problem.

Clark said Hensley’s insurance company will remove the cooler and send it to a lab to be tested.

He said the fire department didn’t investigate further once he and Casey Kump, assistant state fire marshal, agreed that the fire was accidental rather than arson.

Clark said it’s likely that the fire started while employees were still in the restaurant the evening of Jan. 13. They left the building about 8:15 p.m., roughly

half an hour before a driver on 10th Street saw flames and reported the blaze.

Clark said employees wouldn’t have noticed the fire because it started on the roof and had to burn through multiple layers before it reached the inside of the building.

When they went outside the smell of woodsmoke, if there was any, would hardly have been unusual given the number of woodstoves used on a chilly January night, he said, including one next door.

OREGON IN BRIEF

From wire reports

Lawyers appeal dismissal of lawsuit filed on horse’s behalf

PORTLAND — Attorneys for a once-neglected horse are filing an appeal after an Oregon judge dismissed their lawsuit last year, finding that animals don’t have a right to sue.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports lawyers from the Animal Legal Defense Fund sued the horse’s former owner for lifelong costs of medical care.

The horse named Justice was discovered in March 2017 covered in lice, 300 pounds (136 kilograms) underweight and with frostbiten genitals.

Washington County Pro

Tem Judge John Knowles tossed the lawsuit in September, saying “non-human animals are incapable of accepting legal responsibilities.”

He said granting legal standing to animals could result in a “flood of lawsuits.”

The animal rights activists argue the state Supreme Court has already recognized that animals can be considered victims under the state’s animal cruelty statute.

Man used ax and knives to commit murders

PORTLAND — The Oregon State Medical Examiner says the weapons used to kill four people Saturday at

their Oregon home were an ax and knives.

The Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office said Tuesday that sharp-force trauma was the cause of death for 9-month-old Olivia Gago, 31-year-old Shaina Sweitzer and 64-year-old Pamela Bremer.

The medical examiner said 66-year-old Jerry Bremer died of a combination of blunt-force trauma and sharp-force trauma.

The sheriff’s office says Mark Gago killed his parents, his girlfriend and their daughter Saturday night before deputies fatally shot him as he attacked an 8-year-old girl who was Sweitzer’s daughter.

Walden talks border issues, tax cuts at town hall in Bend

The Associated Press

BEND — Rep. Greg Walden, the only Republican in Oregon’s congressional delegation, held his first town hall in Bend in nearly two years to discuss national and local issues facing his 2nd Congressional District.

The Bulletin reports a crowd packed into the Mountain View High School auditorium on Saturday to hear from Walden. Before fielding questions Walden said: “Let’s be civil to each other as Oregonians.”

A big issue was Walden’s thoughts on the federal government shutdown.

Walden earned applause from many in the crowd when he reminded them he recently voted with Demo-

crats to reopen much of the government. He also told the audience he supports President Donald Trump’s views on strengthening border security.

“We have a humanitarian crisis on the border, and we have a broken immigration system in the interior, and we need to fix both,” Walden said.

Walden received push-back from some in the audience when he described his support for the federal tax cuts that some say benefit corporations more than individuals.

“It is no secret I supported them, and I think they have had a strong effect on the economy,” Walden said as audience members belated in unison, “No.”

A couple of high school

students asked questions about planning for Bend’s growing population and Walden’s plans for gun safety, especially after all the school shootings in America.

“I’m fully committed to making sure our schools are safe,” Walden said.

Walden explained he is working on creating more training for law enforcement around active shooter situations, more access to mental health services and a stronger background check system for gun owners.

Walden said he fully supports the Second Amendment.

“I also take an oath of office to stand up and support every amendment of the constitution,” Walden said.

When should you be treated in the Emergency Room?

- When a loved one is unconscious or unresponsive
- When you suspect a heart attack – chest pain, shortness of breath, etc.
- When you suspect a stroke – facial droop, weakness on one side, slurred speech
- After an accident or injury where you suspect a concussion, broken bone, internal injury, or other serious condition.

For most other health concerns, call your primary care doctor or provider. For life-threatening emergencies, call 9-1-1.

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