

DAILY PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Friday, April 26, the 116th day of 2019. There are 249 days left in the year.



TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On April 26, 1865, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was surrounded by federal troops near Port Royal, Virginia, and killed.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$2.4 million
11-14-20-26-31-35

Mega Millions: \$212 million
7-24-30-48-67-9-x4

Powerball: \$166 million
6-32-35-36-65-PB 4-x5

Win for Life: April 24
26-31-49-76

Pick 4:

April 25

• 1 p.m.: 6-2-5-6

• 4 p.m.: 6-7-2-6

• 7 p.m.: 2-2-5-6

• 10 p.m.: 8-3-9-1

Pick 4:

April 24

• 1 p.m.: 7-2-9-7

• 4 p.m.: 3-5-4-0

• 7 p.m.: 3-2-9-7

• 10 p.m.: 8-4-3-1

ROAD REPORT

Numbers to call:

• Inside Oregon: 800-977-6368.

• Outside Oregon: 503-588-2941.

NEWSPAPER LATE?

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Perfect order is the forerunner of perfect horror."

— Carlos Fuentes, Mexican author (1928-2012)

MERKLEY

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of big money in politics, and strengthen ethics rules for public servants," according to the bill.

Later, during the Q&A portion of the town hall, a woman in the audience asked the senator about voting right.

"I look at Oregon's system, and I don't understand why I'm not hearing more about paper ballots and vote by mail," she said. "Am I missing something?"

Merkley explained the For the People Act would require states to follow Oregon's lead by only accepting paper ballots, and the reason she's not hearing more about it is because the bill is currently stuck in the Senate.

"(Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell) has criticized every aspect of For the People because he's benefitting from the dark money, he's benefitting from the gerrymandering, he's benefitting from the voter suppression, and I just gotta say, if you believe in the vision of our Constitution, you believe in voter empowerment, not voter intimidation," he said. "We've got to win that fight."

A man from Cove also had a question about voting, but his focused on the right to vote.

"What are your thoughts on allowing felons to vote?" he asked.

Senator Merkley replied with a short history lesson based on "13th," a Netflix documentary he found intriguing.

"After the Civil War in the South, people said, 'Hey, there's a way to keep African-American men from voting' — charge them with a felony because the 13th Amendment said you could strip them of their voting rights if they were convicted

of a felony," he said. "So the felony became a dramatic instrument of mass incarceration of black men after the Civil War."

"I think today, when people have completed their time in jail, for whatever crime, they should be able to vote again because they've served their time and they're going to be more productive if they're received as a full member of society and much less likely to commit another crime."

Investing in families

The second challenge the senator said he is working to solve has to do with housing, health care, education and good paying jobs, which he says are the four most common issues that come up when he speaks with his constituents.

"These are things that give families a lot more success, make our children a lot better off and launch them into a better future, and that means a better America for all of us," he said.

In an interview with The Observer before the town hall, Merkley explained these two challenges are "tied together because if the first (corruption) was fixed, we'd be doing the second (investing in families), but we're not."

To highlight the connection between his first and second challenges, Merkley called out prescription drug companies.

"We have got to take on the huge amount of money drug companies put into campaigns, and that goes right back to some of what I was saying about the corruption of our democracy," he said. "Everybody in America wants us to take on the high drug prices. The only people who don't are people who profit off it, and they're running the government."

Merkley introduced a low-cost drug act to the House in November 2018, but because it has not moved out of committee to the Senate since then, he said he plans to reintroduce it soon and hopes the president will show interest in working with him.

"We're paying more than people in any other developed country even though we pay for the basic research that goes into the drug enterprise. My bill says we can't be charged more than the meeting price of what's charged in Canada, the 11 largest European countries and Japan," Merkley said. "It's a reference pricing bill. The president said he wants to do a reference pricing bill, so here's a great opportunity for collaboration."

"I'm not sure the president will follow through because he's so susceptible to pressure from the drug companies, but I've got the bill ready, I'm waiting for him, and I'm going to invite him to join me."

In continuing with the theme of investing in families, Merkley said addressing, amending and solving the student debt crisis is paramount to the future of America's middle class economy.

Zach Cahill, a sophomore at EOU studying business and economics, said he was concerned about access to grants and loan cost as a college student.

"Can you tell me how you're advocating for student support and help to make college more affordable?" asked Cahill, who also plays football for the university.

Merkley then asked the people in the room to raise their hands if they were concerned about the high cost of higher education. Nearly everyone did.

"When I was out of high

school, you could come home and work a minimum wage job and save enough to pay your college tuition. Is that possible now? No way, which is why I supported the debt-free college act," he said. "It doesn't mean you don't pay anything, but it does mean families pay more according to their ability so students can go forward out of college and live their lives free of the millstone of massive debt."

Climate change

While the senator's third area of concern didn't draw as many questions from the crowd at Zabel Hall as economic, social or immigration issues, the topic was not ignored.

Merkley said America must team up with the rest of the world in order to truly reduce the acceleration of carbon pollution — otherwise, it is all for naught.

"I think there's kind of a comfort that folks have because we're doing a little bit more fuel efficiency in our vehicles or a few more solar panels, but the fact is, so far, it's not making a dent in the acceleration of carbon pollution," he said. "We not only have to accelerate our efforts, but we have to work in partnership with the world because if we don't get cooperation with other countries, our act alone won't solve the problem."

Hot-button issues

Although Thursday's town hall featured community member questions that could neatly fit into one of the senator's three categories of concern, a few other hot button topics rose to the surface during the Q&A portion of the afternoon.

An EOU student, who said he is originally from California and is now a resident of Brookings, asked about

the senator's support for banning the sale for semi-automatic fire arms or assault rifles, and for limiting the capacity of magazines.

"In the future, what are the odds that my children will have the same chance that I have to fight enemies, foreign and domestic, on our soil, if anything comes to that?" he asked.

The senator responded with asking the people in the audience to raise their hands if they support a national background check system similar to Oregon's — almost everyone raised their hands.

He then asked about how they felt about limiting the size of magazines to 10 bullets and cracking down on straw purchasers, who avoid background checks and obtain guns by getting someone else to buy for them.

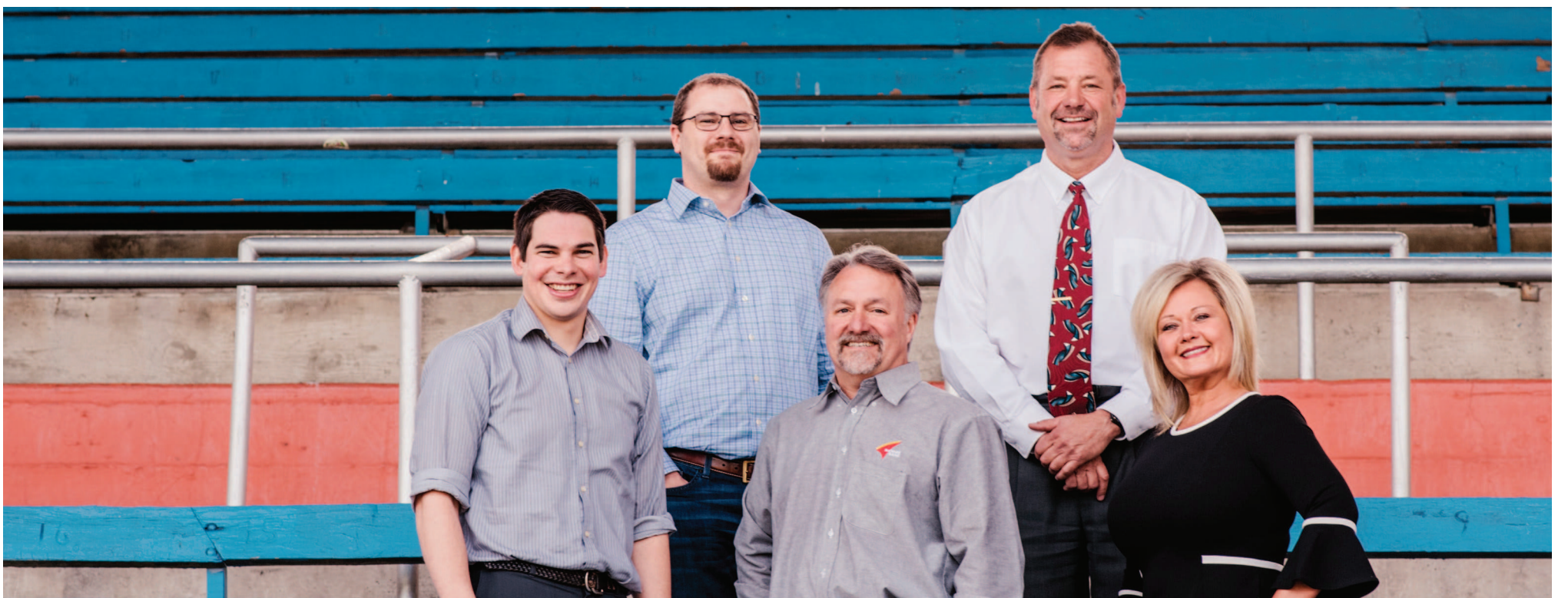
Most people were in support of the magazine limitation, and nearly everyone was in support of stricter laws to thwart straw purchasers.

"We have all kinds of fighting enemies on foreign soil, and of course that's the military's responsibility, (but) we're talking here about gun ownership that involves hunting, target practice, gun collecting," the senator said. "I come from Southern Oregon where (owning guns) is a sacred (right) to people."

Following this question on gun control, a woman from Union County offered her personal experience of spending eight days on the border near El Paso, Texas, and her interactions with immigrants and vigilantes there.

"I know that we're in Eastern Oregon and it doesn't affect us as much, but I'm very concerned about the vigilantes who have taken matters into their own hands on the

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