

Local

Town hall and banquet

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The town hall began with volunteers from the local Boy Scouts, troops 452 and 450, who carried the American and Oregon flags to the front of the room for the flag salute.

Walden began his talk by recognizing Mayor Kim Mosier and County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, as well as Rep. Cliff Bentz, all of whom attended.

The drought situation in the area was of note to Walden. "It's great to be back in eastern Oregon," he said, "I just wish there was more snow pack here."

He began by referencing legislation to help veterans. "There's probably no greater calling any of us in Congress should have than to take care of the men in women who wore our nation's uniforms and protected our freedoms," he said.

Forest Management.

Walden then bounced to forestry issues, considering the amount of federally managed forests in this area. "There's been a lot of controversy about how they're managed, or not managed, whether we're going to have access to them or not."

He mentioned the Regional Forestry Summit he attended in La Grande last fall, which he felt had great turnout. "I pointed out that there are problems with the Blue Mountain Forestry Plan as it exists—they need to go back to the drawing board to involve more local input and much more."

"On top of that is the new over-snow travel rule they're starting to talk about," he added. He said he was pleased, at least, that action on the Travel Management Plan was temporarily deferred, but not completely satisfied, so he reintroduced the Forest Access Rural Communities Act in Congress, and says he hopes to get "action and traction" on it to "prohibit the Forest Service from implementing or enforcing any part of their Travel Management rule."

He explained that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service would have to "consult directly with affected counties before they could decommission any roads or trails."

He said affected counties would have the power to override any Forest Service proposal.

"This is not an easy undertaking. There's a lot of pushback on legislation like this, but I continue to fight for making sure our local voices are heard."

EPA.

Walden then touched on issues within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "We passed legislation this week to deal with the EPA, to open it up and make it more transparent." EPA Science Advisory Board members will be required under that law to disclose conflicts of interest, and dissenting scientific opinions will have a chance to be presented. A second bill will also require that the EPA make public and place online all science used in making decisions.

Walden mentioned that Congress has reduced EPA funds by 21%, which places them back to a staff level of 1989.

"One fight we're still

having is the Clean Water Act," he said. "Suddenly they were gonna declare stock ponds and irrigation ditches as if they were navigable waterways." He said the cromibus that was passed at year-end "pulled back on those provisions" and protected agricultural water.

He acknowledged that this limitation doesn't solve the overall issue of the EPA, "But it was all we could get when negotiating with the Senate president. We need to do more," he said.

Veterans Services.

"We passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for Veterans Act," Walden announced.

He stated too many military lives are being lost and one of his goals is to figure out how to stop that. He said this bill increases access to mental health care and should improve the quality, and then he highlighted other legislation.

HR280 deals with eliminating and recuperating \$380,000 in bonuses paid to Veterans Administration executives who oversaw situations with horrific wait times and delays, sometimes resulting in the death of a veteran. This bill has passed the House and gone to the Senate.

HR294 authorizes three years of long-term foster home care for about 900 veterans.

The Veterans Choice Program also passed, allowing veterans better access to care by opening up more choices for care providers. Walden believes the act will eventually be helpful to veterans who have to travel more than 40 miles for health care.

"We're off to a rocky start," he said. "The V.A. decided that 40 miles to the nearest medical facility was how the crow flies. Not how the roads go."

He said the House is still working toward implementing some common sense there.

Secure Rural Schools (SRS).

Walden said he was hopeful that more SRS funds may become available to rural communities. That legislation did pass this week.

He said in the meantime, until a long-term solution is found, counties need this help.

Audience Questions and Answers.

Arvid Andersen of Andersen Forestry Consulting asked about the likelihood of Congress adopting a balanced budget.

Walden said, "Next week we'll vote on a budget that just passed out of Committee. It does balance in less than ten years."

He brought out a chart demonstrating a significant difference between President Obama's proposed budget and the one proposed by House Republicans, with Obama's creating roughly three times more debt over the next decade.

"It's a pretty dramatic difference here, in terms of where the country is headed," he said.

He stressed getting a grip on the interest paid on national debt.

After viewing some of Walden's illustrations regarding the budget, Janet Standeford asked if Title 5 for senior services was still active and funded, and he

said it was. She also had several other pointed questions including clarification of his controversial vote to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Walden explained that his vote allowed essential parts of DHS, such as the Coast Guard to be funded, and that the House was utilizing other legislative and legal means to curtail other elements of it.

Ryc Rienks asked when Obama would be impeached and when would Congress step in to prevent him from assisting foreign enemies, alienating former allies and ignoring the Constitution. "We look at you guys in the Congress and nobody's doing anything," he said.

Walden responded, "I share your frustration and have voted repeatedly to stop his executive orders. As to other things—among those is a lawsuit the House is undertaking to challenge one of his executive orders in court. That process is proceeding. That's the first. Second, the House stepped up on the executive order on illegal immigrants and passed amendments to the DHS appropriations bill to stop it. Then Senate had a filibuster. 60 votes. Couldn't be had. And so there we were."

He continued, "Given our constitutional makeup there is a role for the courts here to intervene."

He pointed out that a law has to be passed to overrule the President, and that he has to sign it—and 60 votes are needed to override a veto. There are 54 Republicans in the Senate. "So we don't have a lot of tools to stop a runaway President," he said.

He also mentioned that Congress does not have prosecutorial authority.

"And I don't want the Congress to have prosecutorial authority—because someday Nancy Pelosi might be back," he quipped.

Also discussed was the Keystone Pipeline and the fact that Republicans keep passing it while Democrats keep blocking it, as well as concerns about the Endangered Species Act and Hillary Clinton's secret email server.

Walden also explained some of the rules and regulations that affect the inner workings of Congress.

The audience then shifted back to their displeasure with current federal forest management and a graphic Kirby Garrett of Walden's La Grande office provided showing a large amount of forest land poorly managed and ready to ignite.

"After it burns, we have no way to go in and restore the burned dead trees and restore the soil," Walden said. "The question is whether we can have a county override a federal agency," he said.

Art Sappington summarized the concept of transfer of public land—that since public lands are technically owned by the states and only managed by the federal government, then counties would have that jurisdiction to step in and better manage the forests.

"This is the debate I want to get to," Walden said, "is how to get more local control over federal lands." He says there are many ways to get there. He said in his legislation, this is the case.

Harvey, Andersen and others in the room concurred. Walden listed out several elected officials spanning several western States working on the issue. "We're going to lose our infrastructure, we're going to lose our mills if we don't dramatically change the management processes for our federal forest lands."

Banquet.

The evening was perhaps more animated than last year's annual banquet, with a full slate of special guests, many of whom had never before attended. Sen. Ted Ferrioli, ORP Chair Bill Currier, Rep. Cliff Bentz, Rep. Greg Barreto, ORP Secretary Chris Barreto, and ORP National Committeeman Solomon Yue all arrived to speak before keynote speaker, Congressman Greg Walden took the mic.

Baker County Republican Chair Suzan Jones emceed and helped organize the event along with the elected Precinct Committee People from the party.

Amy Barreto's rendition of the *Star Spangled Banner* moved the crowd.

Each guest took five minutes to address a concern for the audience.

Sen. Ferrioli mentioned the motor voter bill that just passed, and his concerns that once "County election officials have taken your voter registration card and scanned it into the database, elections officials are to destroy the originals." He views this act as a severe limit to voter fraud investigation.

"Being in Salem is like being in occupied territory," he said. He is especially concerned about a bill coming up next week, sponsored by Sens. Prozanski and Burdick, requiring any and all firearms transfers, even those between private individuals, to be registered. "I don't know that we're going to be able to stop them, but we're pushing back with everything we can," he said.

Rep. Barreto then spoke to the low carbon fuels bill, which just passed.

"Our caucus gave a great argument against this bill and if anyone was out there listening who had any semblance of common sense or reason, they would have picked up on that and said, hey this is a bad bill."

He said there is an amount—"a penalty that they're applying to this and nobody knows what it is! Somewhere between six cents and \$1.19 per gallon, is what we heard."

Rep. Barreto spoke to the learning process and frustrations involved with being a newbie representative and having fought that bill for nearly six hours. "I'm learning everyday, and I was kind of down the next day."

Rep. Bentz took the podium and reminded the audience of his town hall sweep next week.

"It's very difficult to be in the minority," he acknowledged, and much of his speech on the subject was humor-filled.

"We have a name for Senator Ferrioli's caucus—it's the Road Kill Caucus because they've been run over so many times," he joked. The Oregon House Caucus is the "Hope Springs Eternal Caucus," with its 25 out of 60 members.



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ORP Chair Bill Currier.

Sen. Ted Ferrioli.



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ORP National Committeeman, Solomon Yue.

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Congressman Walden jokes with Baker County Republican Chair Suzan Ellis Jones.

Newly elected ORP Chair Currier was up next. Currier gave an overview of 2014 and said, "Looking forward to 2016, we have some incredible opportunity."

He said the grassroots in the party was never a problem in Oregon, and he plans to make better resources available at a state level.

"We have a shot at the governor, thank you, John Kitzhaber. We're going to have a shot at four of the statewide candidates for office, so this is a very important election coming up."

Currier said big name speakers are coming to Oregon to fund-raise for the party, including newly elected Rep. Mia Love from Utah, Steve Forbes, and Governor Butch Otter from Idaho.

Chris Barreto greeted the crowd but yielded much of her time to Yue, who had never previously attended the annual banquet.

As national committeeman, Yue is responsible for acting as a liaison between ORP and the National Republican Committee (RNC), and is one of two individuals who votes on behalf of Oregon at the party's national level.

Yue said he is focused on electing a Republican president.

Yue spoke to his success in getting Governor Rick Perry to come to Oregon to campaign for Dennis Richardson, and to the Republican party's hesitancy on a national scale to assist Oregon financially under former ORP leadership—a sentiment that has now reversed under ORP's new executive team.

After a call from RNC Chair Reince Priebus, Yue

traveled to Washington DC and secured the loan to pay off existing debt, leaving ORP free to rebuild its treasury.

Yue is also, in part, behind the forming of Republicans Overseas, a group of over seven million voters who are treated as tax dodgers under the Obama Administration's Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, unless they can prove otherwise. Those who forgot or weren't aware of the correct new forms can be penalized up to half their overseas earnings. On May 6, a lawsuit will be served against the IRS by Republicans Overseas on their behalf.

After door prizes were distributed, Walden gave his keynote speech during which he reflected on a trip to the Reagan Library where President Reagan is entombed—still in his cowboy boots, eternally facing the sunset. He also quoted Teddy Roosevelt and stressed the need for another president who takes pride in American exceptionalism, keeps the internet free and open, "welcomes with open arms" Israel, and upholds the Constitution.

"The American people yearn for a president who trusts them to make their own decisions, spend their own money, make their own choices about their healthcare, and not have this government with a cradle to grave concept that they know best and you just can't figure it out," Walden said to great applause. "We need to go in a better direction."

Earnings for the evening were just under \$7,000 due to a combination of silent and live auction items, and banquet and raffle tickets