

Local

Bentz's town halls

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There were to be two more gatherings following the one in Haines later that day, in Durkee and Huntington, and then in Ontario, Vale, Burns and John Day on Saturday.

Andrea Dominguez, Bentz's assistant for the last six years, was absent for the first two meetings, but met Bentz for the meeting in Haines in order to set up a PowerPoint presentation, which was unavailable earlier due to technical difficulties.

Dotty Miles said, "Thank you for coming out to small towns. We appreciate it."

Bentz replied, "You're very welcome. I'm very happy to be here."

At the outset, he highlighted the goal of the meeting, saying, "At the end of the day, I want to know what you guys are thinking, and what you want me to do."

Bentz went on to explain that as a representative, he would submit legislative bills for everyone within his district wishing him to do so, though he may not necessarily agree with what is submitted. Since the start of the legislative session, February 2, between 2,500 and 4,000 bills have been submitted in total, 73 of those having been drafted by Bentz. A total of 34 bills then were introduced, and of those, 22 were scheduled or requested to have a public hearing scheduled, by April 10, the deadline for scheduling a work session, he said.

He discussed different bills of interest, listing them, with his position on each one. First up was the sage-grouse listing/habitat preservation topic. Bentz said \$10 million, at the rate of \$2 million over five years, would be earmarked for preservation efforts, but it requires matching funds, with the possible result being \$4 million a year for five years. This is a bill he does support.

Walt Jury asked Bentz if efforts to preserve sage-grouse habitat could end up costing us all more in the future. Bentz said, "Not much that happens is in our control." He explained why so much is being done in order to avoid listing of the sage-grouse as an endangered species, saying, "The listing is so horrible for private land."

He discussed the Low Carbon Fuel Mandate next, a bill he doesn't support, explaining the process involved with fuel blends such as those using corn ethanol and sugar cane ethanol. "With sugar cane ethanol, you can drive down carbon intensity (in gasoline) by almost 4 1/2 %," compared to corn ethanol, which decreases the carbon intensity in gasoline by only about 1%, he said.

He received some laughs in response when he asked how many people in the community raise sugar cane.

He explained the issues involved with the mandate, the least of which would be increased fuel prices, and the addition of requirements to purchase carbon credits. "This game has been discarded as being completely stupid by Europe. This is cap and trade."

Bentz voiced his frustration about having to discuss increases in gas taxes with legislators, in connection with raising money to pay for bridge repairs in Oregon, and said he would be more receptive if there were a discussion about a possible repeal of the Low Carbon Fuel Mandate, which has already been signed into law. "I don't know any (news) papers that came out in favor of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, and yet, it still got passed," he said.

"China creates 10 billion tons of CO2 a year. The United States creates five billion tons of CO2 a year." He talked about an innovative program pioneered by Oregon State University, which would reduce Oregon's CO2 level by about 1.3 million tons a year, he said. The program would cost \$3 million.

Ed Hardt said, "The CO2 thing is a farce to start with," speaking about naturally-occurring CO2 levels, such as those caused by volcanoes, compared to effects by humans since the industrial revolution.

Bentz talked about the water supply situation in Oregon, discussing the next topic, a bill he introduced to provide loans to individuals to deepen their home wells in times of severe drought, and to provide funds to study water supply issues.

He discussed the lack of funding for schools, saying there should be another \$200 to \$300 million toward education. Bentz said, "The question is, as you look at the \$7.2 billion general fund allocation to schools, is that enough?"

Betty Palmer, Baker School District Interim Superintendent, spoke about her concerns regarding funding for education, and Bentz responded with some possible sources.

Bentz pointed out the "kicker" available from the state in the amount of \$320 million, which is something that would normally go back to taxpayers, but asked if that could be used for education instead. Bentz and Palmer both discussed the need to look at the burden on teachers, including special education programs and language barriers.

Colleen Taylor asked, "Where is the legislature at with redoing the PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) program?"

Bentz responded that after a reduction in the cost was successful, roughly \$23 of every education dollar now goes toward the PERS. If that reduction is reversed, back to around \$28 of every dollar, the "hit would be astounding," he said.

Bentz discussed raising the minimum wage to \$15, a bill he doesn't support. He talked about the devastating job losses to the middle class as a result, with too much mechanization, computerization, and globalization.

Bentz explained a bill concerning paid sick leave that will likely pass, which would include five days, and 40 hours a year, and compensation for any unused leave, another idea he doesn't support.

He ran down the list of bills of interest, speaking about what he thought the

chances are of them passing:

1) \$10 million for sage-grouse: a better than even chance of actually becoming law. 2) The Low Carbon Fuel Mandate is the law, and Bentz's chances of getting it repealed are modest. 3) Money to deepen wells: Unlikely. 4) More education funding: Yes, but it may be very, very little. 4) A ban on cattle feed antibiotics: Probably not, but it may be too early to tell. 5) \$15 minimum wage: Bentz thinks it will pass, but it may be \$12, phased in over three to five years. 6) Paid sick leave: it will probably pass. 7) BOLI (Bureau of Labor & Industries) Cease & Desist: some form may pass, but "watered down." 8) \$320 kicker: It probably won't get the votes. 8) Industrial solar projects: It won't happen, due to lack of funds. 9) Increase in corporate taxes: probably won't pass, but it is possible it could.

Bentz supports four of the bills on the list, \$10 million for sage-grouse, money to deepen wells, more education funding, and industrial solar projects.

Colleen Taylor asked Bentz, "Are you going to run for Governor?" This question was anticipated by Bentz, and his mock attempt to avoid it caused some laughs in the crowd. Flattered, he said, "It takes \$10 to \$12 million to run for governor. I don't have \$10 million on me, and most of my friends don't either." He stated that he supports Congressman Greg Walden, and hopes he enters that race.

Bentz attended two more town hall meetings later Friday, held in Durkee and Huntington, and four more on Saturday, held in Ontario, Vale, Burns and John Day.

Huntington.

Oregon House of Representatives' Cliff Bentz, Eastern Oregon District 60, held a 2015 Legislative In-District informational meeting in Huntington on Friday, March 27 at the Howell's Cafe and Streamliner Lounge banquet room from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

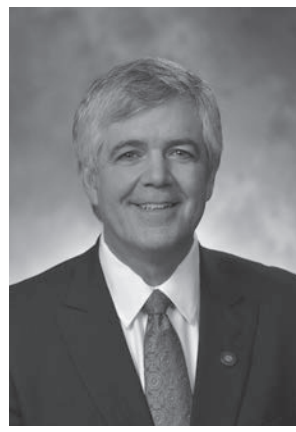
Rep. Bentz spoke with a small crowd of business owners, local city government officials and interested residents in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Also present were Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey and his wife, Lorrie.

The main objective of the meeting was to inform the citizenry of what's happening in Salem at this year's Legislative session and to get input as to what is important to the people of his district.

Local concerns centered around the impact of the sage-grouse controversy, current drought conditions and the impact of the raising and lowering of the Snake River by Idaho Power on the tourist based economy in the region. Also discussed was the proposed \$15 an hour minimum wage and the detrimental effect it would have on our local businesses.

Rep. Bentz summarized the events leading up to Governor Kitzhaber's resignation and the swearing in of Governor Kate Brown saying, "Kate will do a very good job. She



Submitted Photo.

Rep. Cliff Bentz.

works very hard and will be a formidable opponent in the next election."

He explained the following bills being considered in the current legislative session and how he voted or plans to vote on each one.

HB 2401 \$10 million for Sage Grouse is a bill he wrote and will vote yes on. This bill is a preemptive strike to keep sage-grouse off the endangered species list and sage grouse lands in state rather than federal hands.

SB 324 Low Carbon Fuel Mandate was a no vote for Bentz, but has passed into law anyway. He feels this bill will not measurably help the environment but will raise fuel prices.

HB 3334 Money to Deepen Wells is a yes. According to Rep. Bentz, "Oregon's water table is dropping and there is currently no money to investigate alternative sources."

HB 2009 \$15 an hour Minimum Wage is a no vote. He believes it will put to much of a strain on small business, especially here in Eastern Oregon, but expects it to pass at \$12 an hour to be phased in over five years.

SB 454 Paid Sick Leave was a no vote for the same reason as above, however he believes the bill will pass in the next two weeks. It will mean that every worker full or part-time will earn sick leave. Only businesses with 5 or less employees will be exempt.

SB 615 BOLI Cease & Desist No. This bill would have given full authority to the Bureau of Labor and Industries to immediately close any business if they believed they violated the employment statutes without proof in court. This bill was pulled off the floor and returned to committee for review.

HB 4078 Industrial Solar Projects was a yes. Rep Bentz believes this bill will benefit Eastern Oregon and bring in more jobs.

Rep Bentz would like to continue to keep communication open between him and the people he represents and hopes that you will contact his office anytime you feel strongly about an issue. He can be contacted at (503)9861460 or at rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. He also informed his audience that he and his wife are looking forward to touring the area on their bikes as participants in the Cycle Oregon tour coming to this region in September of 2015.

Representative Bentz has introduced or sponsored 82 bills this session and is currently serving on the Revenue Committee as vice chair, the Transportation & Economic Development Committee, the Energy & Environment Committee, the Joint Tax Credit Committee as vice chair and is Joint Legislative Counsel.

Baker City native serves on New Orleans



Photo submitted by the Navy.

Seaman Kasey Knaus is serving aboard the amphibious ship, The New Orleans.



Photo submitted by the Navy.

The amphibious ship, The New Orleans docks.

SAN DIEGO – A 2011 Baker High School graduate and Baker City, Oregon, native is serving aboard USS New Orleans, one of the Navy's newest and most advanced amphibious ships, designed to deliver Marines and their equipment to and from war zones.

Seaman Kasey Knaus is a boatswain's mate aboard the San Diego-based San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship.

Seaman Kasey Knaus is a boatswain's mate aboard the San Diego-based San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship. The ship is longer than two football fields at 684 feet, 105 feet wide and weighs more than 24,000 tons. Four diesel engines can push the ship through the water at more than 24 mph.

USS New Orleans is the fourth Navy ship to be named for the city of New Orleans, and is the second vessel in the San Antonio-class of high-tech amphibious assault ships.

As a 21 year-old with numerous responsibilities, Knaus said he is learning about Himself as a leader, sailor and a person. He added that it is an exciting time to be in the Navy, and serving aboard a ship has truly made him a better person. "Helped me become a better leader and it improved my social skills," said Knaus.

He also said he is proud of the work he is doing as part of the New Orleans' 427-member crew, protecting and defending America on the world's oceans. "The Navy is capable to place forces anywhere in the world. We assist the Marines to accomplish their mission and we provide a forward operating force to keep the fight away from home," Knaus explained.

Sailors' jobs are highly varied aboard USS New Orleans. Approximately 46 officers and 381 enlisted men and women make up the ship's company, which keeps all parts of the ship running smoothly — this includes everything from washing dishes and preparing meals to handling weaponry and maintaining the engines. Another 700 or so form the deployable Marine Corps battalion and New Orleans is capable of transporting the battalion and landing them in hostile territory via helicopters, vertical takeoff and landing aircraft and air-cushioned landing craft.

"New Orleans is truly a fine warship and it is our duty to bring her to life," said Capt. Doug Verissimo, the ship's commanding officer. "Our Sailors have been working very hard bringing her from a post-deployment repair period to our upcoming tactical integration with our Marine teammates. I feel an unparalleled sense of pride working alongside our nation's finest.

Collectively, the San Antonio-class ships will functionally replace more than 41 ships providing the Navy and Marine Corps with modern sea-based platforms. Amphibious transport dock ships are warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions. These ships support amphibious assault, special operations or expeditionary warfare missions and can serve as secondary aviation platforms for amphibious ready groups. Because of their inherent capabilities, these ships have been and will continue to be called upon to also support humanitarian and other contingency missions on short notice.

As a member of one of the U.S. Navy's high-tech amphibious assault ships, Knaus and other New Orleans sailors are proud to part of a warfighting team that readily defends America at all times.

"It gives me a sense of fulfillment to serve the world's most diverse and capable fighting force," said Knaus