

# Bonamici Holds Town Hall *continued from front page*

imbursed for clean-up of marine debris. Bonamici said she is also a co-sponsor of a bill that was expected to pass that reauthorizes research into harmful algae blooms. She also worked on the Weather Forecasting Improvement Act, which as initially proposed would have taken funding from climate change research. Bonamici was able to help change the bill to retain funding for climate research and help get it passed by the House. Bonamici also co-sponsored an amendment that would keep the federal government from interfering with states that allow industrial hemp production, including Oregon.

Bonamici noted that she remains concerned about several major issues that congress has been unable to act on. 'Secure Rural Schools' is a local concern that Bonamici says she is very concerned about how long it is taking to find a solution. "We're hopeful there will be a solution that can get through both chambers and signed by the President into law so we don't have to keep coming back and getting these band-aids for funding which has been helpful but is not a long term solution," said the Congresswoman. Bonamici also mentioned she is concerned about timber management policies and risks from forest fires.

Another concern is immigration reform which has passed the Senate and has a slightly different bill pending in the House. "I would like to see something start moving forward so we can get that issue addressed," said Bonamici.

Tax reform is another issue that Bonamici says she is watching closely. She also noted concerns about funding for the Highway Trust Fund which helps maintain the federal highway system through shrinking gas taxes at the federal level. "This is a really serious issue," said Bonamici. "Transportation projects in Oregon and across the country will be in jeopardy if we don't find a way to fund it."

Bonamici also expressed concerns about emergency preparedness. "We need to do more to be prepared for emergencies and we haven't done enough," said Bonamici. "Of course it's always about how much does it cost and you weight that against the risk. But here it's not if, it's when. And so we need to be ready."

Bonamici concluded her opening remarks by raising concerns about rising gun violence in the United States.

Bonamici said there are numerous ideas about how to address the issue. Bonamici noted that time and again young people are being targeted in our country in school shootings. "What are we going to do to address this problem in our society? There is a common thread in all of these—they are troubled young men. Do they not have enough access to mental health care or councilors in school? Why are they able to get guns? Do we need to have universal background checks and other ways to try to keep guns out of their hands? How do we go about addressing this so we don't have another situation where we are losing our youth, especially in our schools? It's a big issue in our society and we have to work together to find a way to address it." Bonamici's remarks came just days before the latest school shooting took place right in her home state of Oregon at Troutdale's Reynolds High School.

During the question and answer section of the meeting Bonamici talked about disproportionate rules and regulations enforced by FEMA. Bonamici noted that she supported the Flood Insurance Rate Affordability Act which has been signed into law and which temporarily stabilizes flood insurance rates.

Bonamici was asked what she is doing about "eroding religious freedom in our country," specifically people of faith and businesses that are being discriminated against for not participating in specific events. The questioner asked whether the Congresswoman was supporting the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act. Bonamici responded that there is always a struggle when you have the Constitution and individual rights in conflict. "There is freedom of religion and religious rights and I support that, but I also support the right for people to be treated equal under the law," said Bonamici.

An audience member asked if there is a need to re-look at and re-think how our country manages national forests, specifically that forests should not be used only for timber harvests and as an income generator but also be set aside and used for other methods of income generation like tourism and salmon fishing. Bonamici responded that she is concerned about current forest policies and there is a need to better understand what we expect from public lands. Bonamici noted that she sits on the Environment subcommittee of the Science Committee which focuses on the technologies around energy produc-

tion, things like carbon sequestration and the effects of fracking. She said timber policy is not something that her subcommittee has looked at.

When the topic of public health was raised, Bonamici stated that she is frustrated by the failed implementation of Cover Oregon and that we need to find out who was responsible. "That being said, the Affordable Care Act was not about a website, it was about access to health care," said Bonamici. "We hear stories where it is working. Are there places where we need to work on it and make it better and fix what is wrong with it? Absolutely. We're not going to repeal it. We're not going to take back the consumer protections that people are benefiting from. Let's figure out where we need to fill the gaps and strengthen it and move forward and make it better."

When asked about the IRS Scandal, the questioner noted that 501(c)(4)s are receiving protection and we need to stop hiding political funds in what people call charities. Bonamici agreed. "People say the IRS is targeting conservative groups. I want our Treasury Department to be investigating to make sure everyone is complying with the tax code. That's their job. We should be looking at whether any group is misusing the regulations."

Bonamici closed her remarks by stating that campaign finance reform is desperately needed. "The amount of money that goes into political campaigns is obscene. It's ridiculous at the federal level. It affects people's trust in government. It's the wrong direction for our country to have that much money in politics."



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