

National Commander Dillard Visits Vernonia American Legion

Vernonia American Legion Post 119 Commander Damien Cox had the honor of hosting a visit by Paul E. Dillard, the Legion's National Commander, on June 20.



American Legion National Commander Paul Dillard with Vernonia Post 119 Commander Damien Cox during his visit June 20.

Traveling in a large contingent of Oregon Legion officials, Dillard's stop in Vernonia was one of several regional visits that day, all part of a four day tour of Oregon.

Dillard was elected National Commander of the nearly two-million member American Legion in 2021. A native Texan, Dillard joined the U.S. Navy following his graduation from high school in 1965. He served in Viet-

nam through four campaigns including the Tet offensive. He later received an honorable discharge as a radarman second class petty officer from the Navy Reserve. He first joined the Legion in 1969 and has held numerous administrative positions at the local, district, state, and national levels of the organization.

As National Commander his theme is "No Veteran Left Behind," which was the basis for most of his remarks during his Vernonia Post 119 visit. Dillard addressed the crowd in his distinctive Texas drawl and used some humor to open, before switching to some serious concerns for America's veterans. He thanked the American Legion's members for their response to legislative alerts from the Legion on important veteran's issues the Legion is helping champion.

Dillard focused on the PACT Act which would deliver needed benefits for up to 3.5 million veterans who were exposed to the poisons of war due to the prevalence of burn pits, radiation, contaminated water, Agent Orange, and other toxicants during deployments and military assignments. "So many of our young men and women who served need the health benefits that they earned," said Dil-

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Vernonia Celebrates 4th of July



Bonamici Addresses Numerous Issues in Town Hall Meeting

Oregon Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, a Democrat who represents the 1st Congressional District, answered questions from constituents concerning a number of issues during a telephone Town Hall meeting on June 28.

Congresswoman Bonamici immediately addressed concerns about the United States Supreme Court's decision to overturn the *Roe vs. Wade* decision. "I know that many of you, because I've been hearing from you, like me, were infuriated by and disappointed with the United State Supreme Court decision," said Bonamici. "That decision reverses 50 years of precedent and really will result in danger, especially for low income women. I have helped the House pass legislation to put *Roe vs. Wade* into law through the Women's

Health Protection Act, and will continue to do everything I can to get it over the finish line." Bonamici later noted in her response to a question from a meeting participant that she was in high school before *Roe vs. Wade* took effect. "We know that banning abortion doesn't make it go away. But it's going to be devastating for low income people and desperate young people who do not want to bear a child. That's a decision for them to make with their health care provider." She also noted she is cosponsoring the Healthcare Providers Safety Act to help keep abortion care staff and patients safe, and just introduced legislation to prohibit deceptive advertising and claims by groups like the Pregnancy Resource Center who she said mislead people. She also said she is open to making changes to the Supreme Court by Congress.

During her opening remarks, Bonamici noted her work to secure \$10.7 million in Community Project Funding for projects in Northwest Oregon to prevent landslides, strengthen workforce training, support small businesses, and increase access to behavioral health care. Included in that funding is \$175,000 to the Columbia Economic Team, which will support the new Columbia County Small Business Resource Center. "These were projects that were submitted by community members and I picked projects that support both job creation and economic recovery, but also help to meet the needs of underserved communities," explained Bonamici. Bonamici said she is currently advocating for 15 more projects in the next round of funding, including projects that create more affordable housing, road safety improvements, and expand the healthcare workforce.

Before taking questions, Bonamici also addressed the tragic gun violence at the school in Uvalde, Texas and the grocery store in Buffalo, New York. "This has really been heartbreaking as a parent and a policy maker," said Bonamici.



US Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh with Rep. Suzanne Bonamici outside of the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Training Center. Photo courtesy of US Dept. of Labor.

"We've seen too many tragedies like this and we must take action. I'm grateful that bipartisan legislation has finally passed both chambers. What this will do is incentivize more states to establish Extreme Risk Protection Laws, like we have in Oregon, enhance background checks for people under the age of 21 and for straw purchases, and penalize gun traffickers. I know there is more work to do on gun violence prevention, but this is the first comprehensive action in nearly 30 years and I was pleased to help get this signed into law."

When asked about what she is doing to protect the rights of nonbinary people to marry whomever they choose, Bonamici said she does not believe in discrimination. "I know there is some fear among the LG-BTQ+ community in particular because of the concurring opinion by Justice Thomas, and I'm going to do everything I can to fight for the rights of everyone," said Bonamici. "I'm not going to be quiet and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure everyone has the right, that the Supreme Court has already decided, to marry who they want and

who they love."

Bonamici was next asked what can be done to help with the mental health and homeless crisis that is going on. "We know that housing was a challenge even before the pandemic and that wages for working people have not kept up with escalated cost of housing," she said. "It's really unacceptable that people in the United States working full-time and making minimum wage can't afford a one bedroom apartment. In the House and Congress we've been working to pass legislation to reduce housing costs, to raise wages, to help with affordable child care and health care, and also expand housing options. We need more affordable housing and that can be done with policies and investments." She pointed to the Support Ending Homelessness Act which is currently being considered in the House to address these issues, and also pointed back to the Community Project Funding she mentioned earlier which provided funding for behavior healthcare which is often connected to homelessness.

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