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Bonamici Town Hall Meeting *continued from front page*

A constituent asked about a lack of IRS staffing and the backlog of tax returns. Bonamici said she is aware and concerned about the issues and said, unlike the previous administration, the current administration is working to encourage and protect federal workers, and are making efforts to hire people at the Treasury Department. She said her staff is available to help people with issues with the IRS.

Bonamici addressed a question from a veteran who asked why assault rifles and high capacity weapons have not been banned. "I just don't think we should have assault rifles on the street," said the questioner. Bonamici said there is pending legislation to do exactly that, and also pointed out there was an assault weapons ban in effect for 10 years (from 1994-2004 which has not been renewed). "Since that time we have just not had the votes to pass it, sadly," she said. "There is absolutely no reason for people who aren't serving in the military or public safety to have these assault weapons. I'm very concerned about what's been happening. I just recently spoke with a teacher who, after Uvalde, sat down with her students and told them, 'I'll take a bullet for you.' That's not something teachers or students should have to be going through. As we know from

the past when the assault weapons ban was in effect for 10 years, it can be consistent with the Second Amendment. We all want our communities to be safe and easy access to assault weapons is not helping."

Next Bonamici addressed comments about the January 6 Hearings in Congress and the idea of abolishing the Electoral College. "Why can't the people elect the President?" asked the questioner. Bonamici first addressed the January 6 Hearings. "As someone who was there on January 6th I can say unequivocally that it was an unprecedented and violent attempt to subvert democracy and overturn a free and fair election," said Bonamici. "I do know that the Justice Department is watching [the hearings]. I applaud my colleagues who are working on this bipartisan committee that are working so hard to do the really thorough investigation that we need into the events of that day. Everyone who was responsible should be held accountable. No one is above the law, including the President of the United States." Next she addressed concerns raised about the Electoral College. "I agree, it's really hard to explain to people why the majority doesn't win," said Bonamici. "So I support the National Popular Vote measure, which, once there's enough

states to agree to adhere to the popular vote, it has the same effect of having the popular vote prevail over the Electoral College."

A person of color raised concerns about efforts to take away people's right to vote. In answering, Bonamici noted the opportunity she had recently to go to Selma, Alabama with her colleague, the late Congressman John Lewis, and walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, site of the infamous "Bloody Sunday" in 1965 when Civil Rights marchers were attacked, beaten, and teargassed by State Troopers and county possemen. "We've seen these attempts to undermine voting rights across the country," said Bonamici. "Here in Oregon we make it easy and it should be this way everywhere. The first thing we need to do is restore the Voting Rights Act. In the past voting rights has been bipartisan, and it should be — everyone who is in an elected office should believe in the right for citizens to have access to the ballot. I support the Vote By Mail Act that would increase vote by mail ballots with prepaid postage like we finally have in Oregon, and automatic voter registration like we have in Oregon. The pandemic actually helped make the case for vote by mail and many states who didn't use it in the past found it actually works. We see

people waiting in lines and think about all the barriers people have to go somewhere to vote, or for people who are elderly, or who are working. We hear people saying, 'make election day a holiday, but that's not the answer either because if you're a healthcare worker or a front line worker — there are a lot of people who work on holidays. When we look at a representative democracy, access to the right to vote is really key."

Bonamici addressed concerns about the expiration of the free school lunch program for all students. Bonamici said she is a member of the Education and Labor Committee where she is the chair of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services, which works on the school nutrition programs. "I've been a supporter of the School Meal Program. As a mom and a policy maker I know kids can't learn when they're hungry," she said. She noted that she introduced the bipartisan legislation that made it possible during the pandemic for schools to continue to provide meals for students even when school buildings were closed. She said Congress recently passed the Keep Our Kids Fed Act which will provide meals for students through the summer and next school year, and the legislation was signed by President Biden.

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