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**Local Scouts Perform Opening Flag Ceremony for Walden During Visit**

By Emily Braswell

U.S. Representative Greg Walden was in Baker City this weekend to conduct a Town Hall meeting at the Veteran Advocates of ORE-IDA Event Center. The meeting attracted an audience of about 30 citizens, including Baker City Mayor Kim Mosier, Baker County Commissioner Bill Harvey and Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez. By request of Congressman Walden, a former Eagle Scout, local Scouts were invited to perform the opening flag ceremony. Three Cub Scouts from Packs 450 and 452 were able to attend the meeting to perform the ceremony.

Walden initially gave several updates on some of the more pressing concerns before he opened the floor to public comment and questions, beginning with recent inconsistencies with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Of particular interest was regarding eastern Oregon's rural nature and the nondescript verbiage surrounding one of the major changes brought about from the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. The Act was created to improve the access to and the quality of care for veterans, however, the VA has been able to cut some corners because indiscriminate text where the Act requires the VA to "offer an authorization to receive non-VA care to any veteran in the VA health care system if they are unable to secure an appointment at a VA medical facility within 30 days or if they reside more than 40 miles from the nearest VA medical facility." Lately, authorizations for non-VA care have been decreased. The VA decided not to use actual road distance to measure the 40 mile limit. This means that most veterans within Baker City limits would be unable to utilize any care services other than the VA center in La Grande, Ore. because the air distance from Baker City to the center is approximately 39 miles, as the crow flies.

Walden stated, "So we're back on the VA, trying to get some common sense put into their thinking."

Other legislation Walden focused on was a HR 529, which is a Bill that was passed to help improve and safeguard 529 Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding, which Walden is hoping will pass and be funded within the next week, and forestry initiatives to create longer, more stable funding for better forest practices.

"I have been working closely with the Speaker of the House and others and I think we are on the cusp of coming forward with a funding program for at least this year," Walden announced.

He also had promising news regarding wildfires correlating with the Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA). Walden has been working with Chairman of the Transportation Infrastructure Committee to change provisions in the FEMA Law so that forest fires can be treated as a natural disaster so they are covered under FEMA, instead of the land agency on which the fire occurred. He indicated there was support for this effort.

Walden opened the floor to the audience, and questions regarding the country's budget deficit became the popular theme, coupled with an overall disparagement for President Obama's Executive Orders, which many perceive to be unconstitutional. He displayed a pie chart demon-

strating how the U.S.'s budget works, presented as mandatory items and unrestricted fund items, and explained how a budget is created and approved by Congress before it is sent to the President for approval. If approved, it is sent on to the Appropriation Committee which decides the fund levels each program will receive under the overall cap allowed by the pre-structured financial plan. He brought out another comparison chart showing the difference between the President's budget and the balanced budget drafted by the Republicans every year.

"Part of what we are trying to do with the budget is to move the decision making back to the state level to give more flexibility. I have to believe that County Commissioners and Mayors can do a pretty good job if we can get them the money," Walden stated.

Regarding President's Executive Orders, Congress "only has a few tools they can use against a runaway President," Walden acknowledged, "and I, and others, believe he has violated his oath of office."

He continued to explain they are doing everything they can to constrain the deeds, including utilizing the court system to prove violations against the U.S. Constitution and creating injunctions to prevent funding from reaching those orders. When it comes to the President's other agents though, Congress is going after them, especially when it pertains to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), former executive agent scandals, the VA and multiple political hands reaching into the same small pot.

The final focus of Walden's delved deeper into details of years of planning complex forestry initiatives he and other House and separate Committee members have worked hard to get passed, only to have them fail, or be ignored in the Senate. These initiatives focus on opening up forest land for balanced and sustainable timber harvesting practices, in turn creating jobs, boosting the overall state economy and transforming Oregon's forests from overgrown tinder boxes to dynamic plots of timber. Now that the Senate's composition has shifted, Walden is confident there will be more Bills passed through both sessions to the President's desk.

Terry Drever-Gee acknowledged the Congressman's push for passing Initiatives and added, "We are talking about active management, but I think what we need to get to, bottom line, is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) appeals process, because we have a lot of non-profits making a ton of money from our tax dollars simply by appealing judgments and getting all of their fees paid."

Pushing a step past smoother processing after an appeal is made, Congress has also passed the Balance of Harms, giving Judges overseeing these appeals the power to grant privilege to the party or issue which incurs the most harm.

While the non-profits tell judges that you can't 'un-cut' a tree, Congress replies, "Judge, you can't 'un-burn or un-bug-infest' a tree either."

**Baker Methodist  
Church offers****Lenten Schedule**

On March 29, the Baker Methodists will observe with a Palm/Passion service at 8:30 and 11 a.m. The Gospel of Mark stories will be featured during Children's Sermon. Passion texts will be used by Pastor Elke Sharma to present a drama style reading of Palm and Passion of Jesus.

April 2, Maundy Thurs. service will be at 6 p.m. and the April 3 Good Friday Service will be held at 6 p.m. at the church.

The Easter sunrise service will be held at 6:30 a.m. at the Interpretive Center on April 5. A brunch will follow at 9:30 a.m. at the church and there will only be one 11 a.m. service that morning. Baptisms will be administered. The church is located at 1919 2nd Street in Baker City.

**Spring Bazaar on  
Saturday**

The Seniors at Community Connection will have their 20th Annual Spring Bazaar this Saturday, March 28, 9-2:00 p.m. at Community Connection, 2810 Cedar Street, Baker City. There are more than 25 vendors who will be displaying their handcrafts, gift, food, and collectible items.

According to Mary Jo Carpenter, chairman of the Bazaar, there will be a luncheon featuring Taco Salad served from noon-1 p.m., for a minimal charge. The proceeds from the bazaar will go to the senior nutrition program, and is a part of the regular fundraising activities of the Baker Seniors, who raise an average of \$8,000 per year to support senior programs.

For more information or to rent a table, contact Community Connection at 523-6591.

**MayDay, Inc.  
Seeks Volunteers  
to Cover Crisis  
Phone Line**

MayDay's 24-hour crisis line is a vital connection for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and elder abuse. To fill rotations in that position, MayDay needs a compassionate person, who is a good listener and can carefully follow training protocols.

This volunteer position requires a criminal background check and strict adherence to the confidentiality policy.

The job can be done from home or other locations, depending on the setting.

Anyone who can meet these qualifications and be on call approximately one week each month, should contact Milli at 541-523-9472, or come to MayDay's office at 1834 Main St. in Baker City for an application.

Other volunteer opportunities are also available.

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**Postal  
Particulars**

Do you purchase postcards or stamped envelopes from your local USPS? The first printed envelope was issued in 1853. Envelopes have always been produced by private contractors and sold at the cost of postage plus the cost to manufacture. Watermarks have been mandatory for stamped envelopes since they were first issued with the exception of manila newspaper wrappers used from 1919 to 1934. The watermarks usually changed with every four-year printing contract which helped identify the envelope and paper manufacturers. By 1873 the United States issued "postal cards" which are known today as stamped cards. They are produced by the government and carry preprinted postage. These are unlike privately produced postcards which do not bear postage. Post cards were sold at face value until 1999 when a charge for the cost of manufacturing was added. Today Postal Stationery bear the "Forever" stamp which is a warm welcome to consumers.

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