

On the job in Washington D.C.

U.S. Representative for Oregon's 1st Congressional District, Suzanne Bonamici talks about her expectations for the coming year

"The number one issue is how do we rebuild the economy and what policies will best do that, whether it be better education or housing or getting more capital to businesses and streamlining regulations. Those things don't have a rural-urban divide."



BY ISRAEL BAYER
STAFF WRITER

U.S. Representative for Oregon's 1st Congressional District, Suzanne Bonamici, is a leader who is on the go. She spends her time traveling back and forth from her district and Washington D.C., where she represents the people of Oregon.

From rubbing elbows with some of the most powerful people in the country to meeting with farmers, fishermen and homeless advocates – Congresswoman Bonamici's values represent the people she serves across Oregon. Her district encompasses a geographic area that covers urban Portland, the suburban metro area and rural environments from Yamhill County to coastal communities, including Astoria.

Bonamici recently sat down with Street Roots in our offices to talk about her work and expectations for the coming year.

Israel Bayer: *Can you talk about immigration reform and what you think may*

be accomplished this year?

Suzanne Bonamici: We desperately need immigration reform for many reasons. I will give you three examples of things that have come up in my district. When I talk to the hi-tech community, they say it doesn't make any sense. People come here from around the world to the United States to get an advanced degree and then we make them go back. They want to stay here and work here with the skills that they learned, but we make them go back to their home country, perhaps work for a company that's competing with an American company. So that doesn't make any sense.

When I am down in Yamhill County, people in the agriculture sector say that we absolutely need agricultural workers there. The nursery businesses and the agriculture businesses need workers. If we said today, "You can't hire anyone who is undocumented," that would have a tremendous impact on our economy. We need to address that need.

Then we have really harsh personal

situations. I have a constituent who is terminally ill and her sister can't come here to spend her final days with her since our country won't let her since we are afraid she won't come go back home. So that is just heartless policy.

I've been looking at the framework. We need to do some tightening up of border security, but a path to citizenship is something I support. Recognizing the contributions of those that are here from other countries is essential.

I am pretty optimistic something will get passed this session.

I.B.: *Illinois just became the fourth state to allow undocumented immigrants the ability to access a driver's license. Should Oregon follow suit and is there anything the Oregon legislature can do to help with immigration reform?*

S.B.: Yes. In fact, Oregon did not have residency requirements for driver's licenses until recently. You had to prove that you had the skills to drive and proof of insurance to

get a driver's license. Then there was a bill that passed the Oregon legislature without my support requiring proof of legal residency to get a driver's license. That is bad policy.

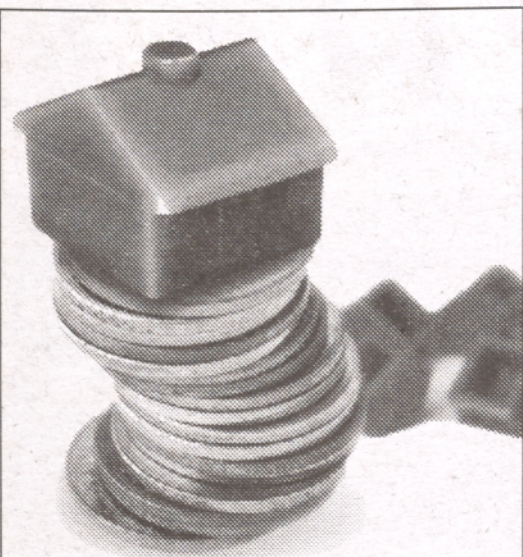
I think it's been detrimental on many levels. It's been problematic for lots of people – not just those that are undocumented but others. For example, those who are transitioning out of homelessness who don't have their original birth certificates, or victims of domestic violence who flee the home. So it's very problematic.

There is also a lot that can be done on the equity and tuition front and allowing undocumented immigrants access to higher education.

I.B.: *You have been appointed to committees on Workforce Protection and Higher Education and Workforce Training. Can you talk about what you hope to get accomplished on these committees?*

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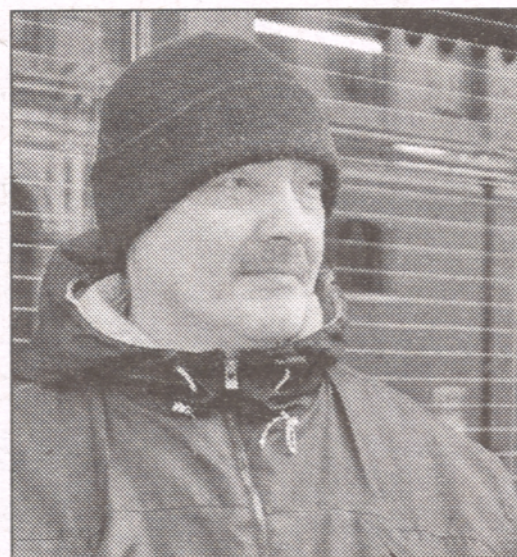
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Salem attempts to tackle a housing policy that would have big impacts

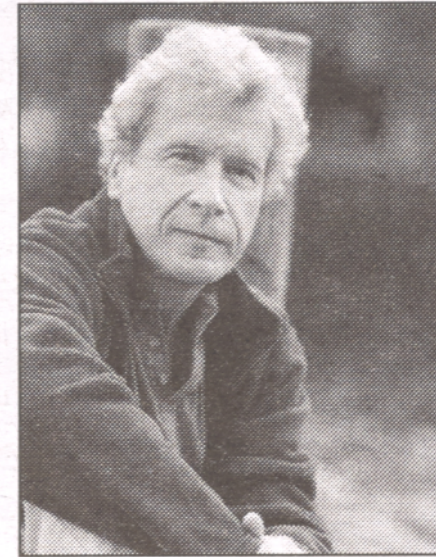
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Vendor week

It's International Vendor Week. Find out more and take part.

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Economic hitman

Author John Perkins talks economics and predatory lending

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