

BONAMICI, from page 1

S.B.: Yes, I am on two committees. I am on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee and Education and Workforce. Each of these committees has subcommittees. So in Science, Space, and Technology I am the ranking member on the Environment subcommittee. We will be looking at the science of climate change, marine research and a lot of environmental issues. I'm very excited to dig in on these issues.

Then there is Education and the Workforce Committee. I am on two subcommittees there. One is Higher Education and the other is Workforce Protections. So in Higher Education, I hope we will be looking at ways we can expand access to higher education for all Americans. Especially things like supporting Pell Grants, which really is a key to quality of life in our community and crucial in rebuilding the economy.

The Workforce Protections subcommittee has jurisdiction over things like worker safety, the Fair Labor Standards Act, Family Medical Leave Act and a lot of protections for workers. There are some migrant worker protections that are covered in that subcommittee as well. So I hope to continue my record of supporting worker's rights through that subcommittee work.

Also, in the education committee, I am very interested in K-12 education and making some changes to No Child Left Behind.

I.B.: Gun violence?

S.B.: Just before I came back to Oregon, a hearing on gun violence prevention that was one of the more moving hearings I've ever sat through. The superintendent of Newtown, Conn. was there, along with the mother of Gabe Zimmerman, who was the staff of Representative Gabby Gifford, who was killed in Tuscon, a chief of police from Minnesota and the Mayor of Philadelphia, who chairs the National Conference of Mayors.

They discussed the need for gun violence prevention, which I support. It's comprehensive and complex, but I support more access to mental health care and universal background checks.

In Oregon, we passed background checks at gun shows through an initiative, but most states don't have that. And so, somebody who can't pass a background check at a store can just go to a gun show or online

and buy a gun. So we need a universal background check.

That seems like a pretty likely thing, and I hope, we can pass it. That will be the first step in keeping guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

One thing to keep in mind is that all of these proposals are going forward. So the ban on high-capacity magazine clips is on those magazines that are sold in the future; it's not like the government is going to come and take them (guns) away from people.

Representative Mike Thompson (CA), a Democrat, who is heading a task force, is a hunter. He goes duck hunting and is forbidden by law from having more than three bullets in his magazine. He is hunting ducks, but someone can walk into a theatre in Aurora with a hundred rounds in a magazine. It doesn't make sense.

I am hopeful about many of the measures, but particularly the background checks.

That being said, we can't ignore the need for access to mental health care and de-stigmatizing mental health.

I.B.: That's my next question. Part of the conversation coming out of the Newtown and other shootings is the lack of mental health stability in the U.S. Oregon has long had an underfunded mental health system - what's the answer?

S.B.: We have to make sure that mental health care is accessible, available and that we de-stigmatize it. It's critical that we fund mental health programs. We have a lot of work to do moving forward.

I.B.: How do we solve the federal government's lack of housing resources for local communities?

S.B.: We need to keep having a conversation about the importance of housing. I used to work at Legal Aid in Eugene. You realize that people don't choose to be struggling or fall into an unfortunate set of circumstances.

Housing is an essential part of stable life and getting people transitioned back to the workforce. I've always been an advocate for affordable housing and will continue to do so. We need to continue to have the conversation about the importance of

housing as it is essential to rebuilding our economy.

I.B.: Portland and Multnomah County have complained for years that the rest of the region, specifically Washington County, has not been doing enough to fund homeless and housing services and capital projects for affordable housing. How does the region move forward with a more coordinated plan to tackle these issues?

S.B.: I know that there are advocates working together effectively. I think we have an excellent community of advocates for low-income housing. There is homelessness throughout our state and we need to make sure that we are having a conversation and creating resources for housing and homelessness.

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That's why state and federal policy is important. I hope that the state legislature does what it can. I will work at the federal level to make housing a priority. We need to make sure that housing is part of the conversation. It's a good investment. We spend a lot of time responding to crisis, let's work on preventing those crisis situations by investing in education and housing.

I.B.: Should Oregon move forward with legalizing marijuana?

S.B.: I think we should be looking at how Washington and Colorado are implementing policy. It's illegal at the federal level, but not at the state level in those states. There is a conflict there. I think we should be watching those two states as examples to see what they do right and what they do wrong. When we put it in front of the voters, which I assume will happen, we will have a lot more information to go on. We will see how they do, especially with Washington being so close.

I.B.: Your district covers a lot of ground, from Astoria to Portland and Beaverton and then south into Yamhill County. Much of the conversation around the country seems to focus on an urban and rural divide. How do we

bring these different communities together towards a shared vision?

S.B.: It's a good thing to have such a diverse district because it really inspires me to learn about not only urban and suburban communities, but also about rural, agricultural and coastal issues. I have a really broad perspective about how these policies impact different areas.

I was in a small town in Yamhill County last night. Here I am in Portland today. It really gives me the opportunity to think about how these policies will impact my entire district.

I think that the divide is smaller than a lot of people think. Wherever I am in the district, 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 rural-urban divide.

There are a lot of things in common, policies and interests, for those communities. I really enjoy going out to talk with my constituents and hearing from them. And I do hear a lot of common themes.

I.B.: What can we expect in Oregon over the next decade?

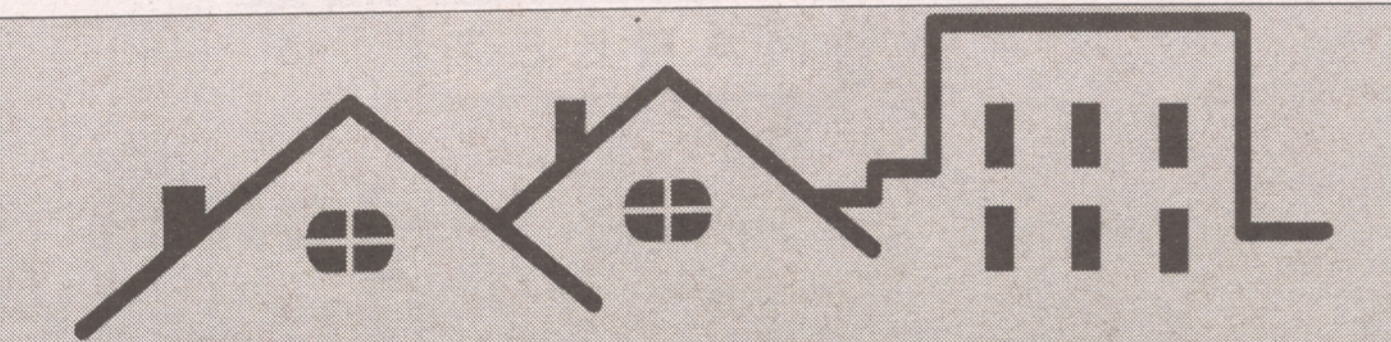
S.B.: I am really proud to be from Oregon and I constantly talk about Oregon as an example. We are ahead of a lot of other states. A couple of examples are health care reform and the Coordinated Care Organizations that are really expanding access to health care with the goal of driving down costs. We are ahead of the curve on this.

We are ahead in our appreciation of creativity and innovation. We have lots of really creative people here who have lots of innovative ideas that are going to be a big part of our future.

We have a beautiful state with our transportation and land-use planning. We have done a lot here to make this a very livable state. I think Oregonians can look forward to a decade of continuing to tackle important issues and encouraging creativity, while expanding on our economy. It's going to continue to be a great place to live and work and raise a family.

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