

## POLLUTION UPDATE

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) cited **Sacred Heart Medical Center** on Feb. 3 for monitoring and recordkeeping violations related to an underground storage tank at its facility on Hilyard Street in Eugene. DEQ also sent **Kingsford Manufacturing Company** a warning letter on Feb. 3 for 23 days worth of Clean Water Act violations at its Springfield facility, specifically for discharging high-temperature wastewater. DEQ sent **Christian Church Homes of Oregon** a pre-enforcement notice on Feb. 22 for violations related to an underground diesel fuel storage tank at **Olive Plaza** that was operated without a permit between 1979 or 1980 and November of 2016.

Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project

## ACTIVIST ALERT

• The GTFF (Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation) is hosting a **Know Your Rights Training** for activists and international students, presented by the Civil Liberties Defense Center 5 pm Tuesday, Feb. 28, at 609 E. 13th Street. This event is open to the public and free.

• **The Coalition for High-Quality and Affordable Education with Fair Labor Practices** (made of different unions and student organization at the University of Oregon) will be having a Rally Against the Tuition Raise noon Thursday, March 2, at the Ford Alumni Center. UO President Michael Schill is recommending a 10.6 percent tuition increase for in-state students and the GTFF says, “We believe this undermines access to affordable education for people in Oregon. Come and speak against the tuition raise!”

• **The Public Interest Environmental Law Conference** is March 2-6 at the UO Law School. See stories this issue and go to [PIELC.org](http://PIELC.org) to download a brochure of the conference.

• **The Eugene-Springfield Nonviolent Communication (NVC)** coordinating committee is hosting a workshop entitled “Living Our Authentic Self.” Organizers say the three-day intermediate level NVC workshop will be led by Robert Gonzales. Gonzales holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and has been conducting NVC training since 1986. The workshop is March 3-5 at the Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High Street in Eugene. For more information or to register, email: [ClassInquiry@comcast.net](mailto:ClassInquiry@comcast.net), or call Steve Goldman at 541-686-3056.

• **The 2017 Sustainability Town Hall** will be held in Corvallis 7 pm Thursday, March 9, at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center on the Oregon State University campus. Registration closes March 5 at [sustainablecorvallis.org](http://sustainablecorvallis.org), and organizers say, “This event typically draws a standing-room-only crowd.” Participants will be seated at 40 tables of eight for an interactive town hall program in three parts, each with a presentation from the main stage followed by discussion and activity at the tables. Opening remarks on “Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Groundwork for a Sustainable Community” will be by Dr. Samantha Chisholm Hatfield, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians who earned her Ph.D. from OSU in Environmental Sciences.



# NEWS

BY TED TAYLOR

## BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

*DeFazio, Merkley draw highly energized crowds to Eugene rallies*

Congressman Peter DeFazio got a rousing reception Feb. 25 at Lane Community College, with attendees chanting “Thank you! Thank you!” when he entered the gymnasium. The standing-room-only crowd of more than 2,000 repeatedly voiced its appreciation for DeFazio’s vociferous opposition to the Trump Administration and its chaotic, backward agenda.

The community forum was followed by a health care rally with Sen. Jeff Merkley.

“The last time I saw a crowd like this, it wasn’t so friendly,” DeFazio said, referring to his town halls six years ago when angry Tea Party conservatives railed against him for his support of the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare, and tried to shout him down. “I didn’t go out the backdoor,” he said to applause. If any ACA critics or Trump supporters were in the crowd Saturday, they were quiet and did not carry signs.

DeFazio condemned the aggressive and ill-planned actions by the new administration, which he called “shock and awe,” a relentless agenda seeking to dismantle our national systems of public education, environmental conservation, health care, consumer protection and constraints on Wall Street plundering. “These are dangerous people in dangerous times,” he said, referring to the Trump team.

“They thought we would be dispirited and demoralized, but they were wrong,” he said. “They have energized people like never before.” He asked how many people in the crowd were becoming politically active for the first time, and easily 1,000 people stood up, cheering.

DeFazio told the crowd that it is vital that the American people “keep up the pressure” on Congress and the administration to thwart the far-right agenda, and to work on removing Trump — and more critically, recruiting and electing more progressives at all levels of government.

Cathy Boucher of Eugene said of DeFazio and Merkley’s rallies: “They weren’t there to reassure us! They were there to ask for our help — to the point where Peter invited those who had time to campaign for swing seats in California next election. I left the events feeling sobered yet inspired and thankful we have these two.”

DeFazio said there are four ways to “fix” Social Security: cut benefits, raise the benefits age, privatize it or, his preference, lift the cap on payments. Currently, only the first \$127,200 of individual annual earnings is taxed. Raising that cap to \$250,000 or more would “assure full solvency for the next 60 years,” DeFazio said, and give a monthly boost to low-income seniors.

DeFazio, along with Sens. Bernie Sanders, Ron Wyden and Elizabeth Warren, introduced a bill to this effect Feb. 16.

DeFazio’s message of resistance was echoed by Sen. Jeff

## Sen. Jeff Merkley pointed out that more than half a million Oregonians have benefitted from Obamacare.

Merkley, who held an enthusiastic rally on health care in the bright sunshine outside the gym following DeFazio’s talk. “We need to resist this president with everything we’ve got,” Merkley said. “We need to stay the course, sustain this energy and rebuild a solid foundation for government by and for the people.”

Merkley pointed out that more than half a million Oregonians have benefitted from Obamacare, including the prevention benefits that lower costs. “We are not going to let Trump dismantle the ACA,” Merkley said. He introduced Maureen Anderson, a nurse from Oregon Health Sciences University, who described the huge population of low-income patients she cares for — the “sickest and most vulnerable” women and babies who would lose health care without the ACA and the Oregon Health Plan-Medicaid.

“In this daily war, we are the boots on the ground,” Anderson said.

Republicans trying to repeal the ACA have not come up with any alternatives that will not cause a revolt by millions of their constituents and haunt them in the mid-term elections. DeFazio outlined a way to improve Obamacare: Add a not-for-profit public option. The original House bill for the ACA had a public option but DeFazio says it was lost in conference committee.

Eugene resident Larry Craig noted that DeFazio spoke against the Electoral College, but Craig said he was “surprised that [DeFazio] didn’t talk about the National Popular Vote state compact. It provides a way of keeping the Electoral College in place while supporting majority vote. In brief, each state in the compact agrees to have their electorates all vote the way of the national majority.”

Local NAACP President Eric Richardson praised Merkley and DeFazio for “leading the state and nation in opposition to this mean-spirited, unhealthy and unproductive administration.” ■

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— PETER DEFAZIO

PHOTO: TODD COOPER