



But do all those packed town halls — 2,000 people in Bend alone — mean that Walden is vulnerable in the 2018 election?

Walden has more than \$1 million cash on hand for the election, according to the Federal Election Commission.

Previous Democratic challenger Jim Crary has filed against him. Para-Olympian and Iditarod racer Rachael Scdoris-Salerno announced May 16 that she intends to run, and *Willamette Week* reports that Chris Van Dyke, the son of actor Dick Van Dyke, and stonemason Michael Byrne are running as Democrats as well. And the *Bend Bulletin* adds to that number with reports that Dr. Julian Bell of Ashland, who ran against Gov. Kate Brown in the Democratic Primary, is entering the contest.

Former Oregon Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, now chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon, is cautiously optimistic that Walden's opponents could have a better chance in the 2018 election.

"There could be a significant difference in his electability in this very election season," she says, but adds that "I'm not so foolish to think that the strong advantages Republicans have will be overcome in one election cycle."

She points to the nearly weekly protests outside Walden's Bend and Jackson County offices and the high

now, Atkins says it's "really important for people to go through their Rolodex and see who they know in eastern Oregon to help them have a stronger voice."

While she says she hopes Walden is listening to people all over the state, "It's more powerful from someone in the district."

Barb Campbell is one of those people in Walden's district — Campbell is on the Bend City Council. *EW* caught her on the phone as she finished up a protest outside Walden's Bend offices. Campbell echoes Nolan's sentiment that the health care bill is a tax bill, saying it will redistribute wealth from the very poor to the very rich.

According to an analysis by the Tax Policy Center, the bill would cut taxes "by nearly \$900 billion over the next decade, mostly benefitting the highest-income Americans." The TPC's analysis shows that the highest income 20 percent of households, those making \$150,000 or more, would receive 80 percent of the benefits of the tax cuts. The top 1 percent, who will be making \$772,000 or more, would get half the benefit, and those in the top 0.1 percent, who will be making \$4 million-plus, would get 28 percent."

"One of our concerns here in Bend is Mr. Walden seems to divide his time quite clearly between folks in places he is getting money — and most of that money is coming from big business interests Big Tobacco, Big Pharma." But then, Campbell says, Walden spends his time "farther east in those tiny little towns getting his votes from people on the edge of poverty but convincing them he's in their corner, playing both sides of the field."

Data from the Center for Responsive Politics shows that the top five industries contributing to Walden's campaign

voted for Trump, the Donald won by 20 points in Walden's 2nd congressional district as a whole.

University of Oregon geography professor Peter Walker spends a great deal of his time on Oregon's east side. He's at work on a book on the Malheur occupation by the Bundy family and others who believe in the privatization of public lands — a group made up mostly of people, Walker reminds us, who are not from Oregon.

"The irony is the Bundys of Nevada came to eastern Oregon and their aspirations were much more radical than people understood at the time — the overthrow of the U.S. government." An ideology Walker says, most people in Harney County did not support.

However, Walker says, Walden, who has a long history of opposing federal involvement in land use, "made a famous speech a few days after the Malheur takeover happened and tried to have it both ways. He doesn't condone violence," Walker says, but "it's pretty clear he's sympathetic to the basic ideological view of the Bundys — federal control should be minimal or nonexistent."

Arran Robertson of Oregon Wild says of Walden's stances on public lands and logging that "I feel like Greg Walden adapts with whatever position he needs to adapt to in his current role"

For his book, Walker says he interviewed ranchers who are "steadfastly, staunchly opposed to the Bundy ideology and occupation," but voted for Trump because they are "genetic Republicans who could not conceive of not voting for a Republican." Ironically, Trump's administration, whose policies Walden's votes indicate he is in lockstep with, actually has reduced local control by removing Bu-

'Here's a guy who traffics on being likeable and he's become ONE OF THEM. He's the swamp.'

—JACK OHMAN, EDITORIAL CARTOONIST

town hall turnout, which she attributes to Democrats who would have been working against him anyway, but also to his faithful Republican constituents who were appalled that he was the lead person on the health care bill.

Atkins says that because Oregon so thoroughly jumped in on the health care expansion, doctors can provide health care in a way they didn't before, due to the increase in insurance.

In Oregon, 654,000 people will be affected if a new health bill removes protections for those with pre-existing conditions, Atkins says.

In Walden's district alone, 129,000 constituents have health care as a result of the ACA Medicaid expansion, she says, and stand to lose it under Trumpcare.

In the middle of the battle over health care, Oregon is dealing with a Medicaid error: The state got approval to skip the annual eligibility check on its Medicaid clients but then failed to check later to see if recipients still qualified, meaning it dispensed millions of dollars in Medicaid assistance with no idea if the Oregonians receiving it were still eligible.

Post Trump, the Democratic central committee is seeing a huge influx all over the state and the group will hold its next central committee meeting in Burns because, Atkins says, "We do want to be visible in eastern Oregon, and because Harney County has revitalized itself I think Walden will be hearing a much louder Democratic voice than he has in the past."

One change that looms for Walden's vast district won't occur until after the 2020 census. As cities such as Bend grow, many are predicting Oregon will be re-districted, and a 6th congressional district might be created.

For those who want to hold Walden accountable right

in 2015-16 were TV/movies/music, pharmaceuticals/health products, health professionals, telecom services and oil and gas.

In addition to taking issue with Walden on health care, Campbell points to a lack of progress on infrastructure such as roads, and a lack of funding for education during Walden's tenure. "There are children in Greg Walden's district — in the U.S. — who can't afford to go to school five days a week" because of a lack of education funding, she says.

"A lot of voters in Bend see him as he doesn't do any harm and he's super powerful and it's good for us to have someone who has been there forever."



At an April town hall in Hood River, Walden was asked about immigration in front of a crowd full of fairly left leaning voters. "Unless you're Native American," he responded, "we're all immigrants."

A good answer for that liberal crowd, but they were less satisfied with the rest of his answer, which mentioned border security. "It's time to make sure we have a legal workforce that can come and go," he told the crowd.

The representative then assured his constituents that former President Obama deported more immigrants than any other administration. And he reminded them that, while only 31 percent of people in the Hood River area

reau of Land Management advisory groups and local land use input.

"A lot of these ranchers are feeling like he's going on the opposite direction from where they wanted him to be going," Walker says.

"There's a lot of grumbling about health care," Walker continues. "Rural people, ranchers, loggers — they are not stupid and they know when something's being taken away from them." But at the same time, he says, the protesters who have shown up at town halls are "not really the style of a lot of people in that area. People have compared it to the Tea Party movement where the most outraged are the ones who show up."

Walden's district is "deeply conservative," Walker says, and people have a sense that they are not being listened to by those on Oregon's west side, in Eugene, Salem and Portland.

"For people in eastern Oregon, it's not controversial, or even in question that there's been a long simmering sense of not being listened to, and Walden has been a key voice in that."

In his Jan. 16, 2016 remarks before Congress on the Malheur armed takeover, Walden said, "We need to be better at hearing people from all walks of life and all regions of our country and understanding this anger that is out there and what we can do to bring about correct change and peaceful resolution."

Voters in Walden's vast eastern district have historically not felt heard by the rest of Oregon and by politicians. Fast-forward to the recent town halls full of angry post-health-care-vote constituents and the question arises: As Walden throws his lot in with Trump in vote after vote, is it Walden who isn't listening?