

TRUMP'S TAX PLAN

Sen. Ron Wyden weighs in on a tax plan that robs the middle class to pay the rich

President Donald Trump's tax plan is not unlike his tweets: short, lacking depth and full of bravado. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden doesn't mince words when he talks about the proposal. He calls it a scam and a "middle-class con job."

The senator has been speaking out against the Trump tax overhaul at town halls on a recent swing through Oregon.

The most recent framework for the Trump plan, posted on the White House website Sept. 27, is essentially a bullet-point list kicking off with the words, "President Donald J. Trump Puts Americans First in Tax Relief," sounding more like a campaign slogan than a plan.

According to Wyden, the earlier version of the plan released in the spring didn't have much more depth. In a recent phone call with *Eugene Weekly*, he reiterated a talking point he has been using about the overhaul — that it is "shorter than a typical Fred Meyer receipt."

The current version he says is a nine-page set of principles that includes four and a half pages of white space.

Wyden says Trump makes a big deal on the White House website about an increase in the standard deduction. The plan says (capital letters in the original) "TAX CUT FOR WORKING AMERICANS: We are laying out a tax-relief framework that will unburden America's Middle Class."

Wyden says, "By itself that sounds good," but he adds that Trump giveth with one hand and taketh away with the other, because the plan takes away the personal and dependent exemptions. For example, he says, if you are a family in southwest Oregon — a married couple and two kids — and you lose the \$16,000 personal exemption, the \$12,000 you gain from the increase in the standard deduction in Trump's plan still leaves you with a net loss.

"In terms of what's on offer now, the middle class comes out behind," he says.

The plan comes, Wyden says, at a particularly important time in the economy with inequality expanding. "We really have two tax systems."

One he says is for the "nurse and the cop" for whom tax is compulsory and there are no Caiman Island deals. The other is not compulsory, and it's for the people Wyden calls the "high flyers" who "can pretty much decide what they are going to pay and when they are going to pay it." That second group does well under the Trump proposal, he says. The first group does not.

The plan also claims it will lower taxes on small businesses and slash the corporate rate from 35 percent to 20 percent. Trump's proposal creates a "new Grand Canyon-sized mega loophole for the wealthy," Wyden says, reiterating another of his town hall talking points.

The Trump administration is facing the challenge of writing actual legislation, not just a framework, and getting it passed through both the House and Senate and their committees in the less than one month left in the legislative calendar if the president wants to get his tax relief in place for next year.

An Oct. 15 CBS Nation Tracker poll found that "58 percent of Americans think the current reforms being discussed would favor the rich, while 18 percent think they would favor the middle class."

Trump has taken to Twitter to promote his tax plan, a strategy that didn't prove useful in pushing through his attempts to reform Obamacare. He tweeted on Oct. 16 that "The Democrats only want to increase taxes and obstruct. That's all they are good at!"

Wyden says Trump's people are 10 months into their administration and "don't have a signature piece of legislation." The senator says he can't recall an administration this far in that didn't have that.

Now is the time, Wyden says, to push back on the tax plans "like we did on health care, so people really understand what's at stake." ■

ACTIVIST ALERT

• As we go to press, Lane County workers with AFSCME, the **American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees** planned to **strike** beginning Wednesday, Oct. 18. Dave Ivan Piccioni, ESSN board and Health Care for All-Oregon member tells *EW* picket lines start at 7:30 am across from the Wayne Morse Plaza. He says, "The number of local county workers is about 700. Seven out of 10 workers are women who disproportionately get less money than men." According to Piccioni, "The community support efforts are organized by ESSN, the Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network for Lane County Workers with the support of The Burrito Brigade's free vegan food. Also helping are The Teamsters, Graduate Teachers Fellows Federation, Student Labor Action Project and music by the Low Tide

Drifters and others." Come and lend your support, he says. The strike will continue daily.

• You can register as an **intervenor** against the **Jordan Cove Liquid Natural Gas Pipeline (LNG)** 6:30 pm Tuesday, Oct. 24, upstairs at Grower's Market, 454 Willamette Street. Organizers of the Springfield Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice Indigenous Rights Committee say, "Everyone with an interest in protecting Oregon from the dangers of this 235 mile pipeline can register." A short educational video created by the Klamath tribe will be shown and hot food and drinks will be provided. All are welcome. Bring computer or tablet — spares will be available. Or register online by Oct. 26 at: rogueclimate.org/file_as_an_intervenor.



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