

# SEN. RON WYDEN HOSTS JUNCTION CITY TOWN HALL

Residents voice concern over taxes, voting and sexual misconduct



PHOTO: CORINNE BOYER

On Nov. 10, several veterans, high school students and advocacy groups showed up at Junction City High School for a town hall hosted by Oregon's U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden. It was the senator's 78th town hall of the year, and he began by recognizing veterans who had served from the Korean War to post-Sept. 11 veterans.

Topics included whistle-blower protection, moving the presidential election away from the Electoral College and single-payer health care. Members from Health Care for All Oregon wore red T-shirts, and some wore hospital

tional reports of widespread sexual misconduct.

"Obviously there are powerful people — lawyers and publicists and managers — who clearly knew about a fair amount of this, and they're coming forward, and they're saying 'I should have spoken out; I should have taken action,'" Wyden said. "So my view is this shouldn't have happened, A. It should have come to light, B. And out of this we've gotta say that there is zero tolerance for this kind of abuse of power."

Wyden told *Eugene Weekly* the Republican tax plan is a "Trojan Horse for getting an enormous set of tax goodies to

Oscar Martinez said he attended the town hall because Wyden is Oregon's senator and because his daughter told him about the event.

"This is for her an example to hear what's happening beyond Junction City," Martinez said. "Quite often our kids nowadays are connected via Twitter, the internet, and all of that stuff, but to hear it straight from the senator and have him look straight in their face, is a different perspective."

Martinez said one of the most important issues to him is relevant to his position in the Army Reserves. "Person-

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— SEN. RON WYDEN

gowns calling attention to the shortfalls of health care coverage under the current system.

Retired physician Michael Huntington, who worked in a cancer center for 35 years, came to hear Wyden because he wants both Oregon senators to sign on to a Medicare-for-All bill.

"I saw many patients who came to the cancer center with advanced cancers because they were afraid of costs, and I don't want that to happen anymore," Huntington said.

Wyden suggested, as he has in previous interviews and at town halls, that the West Coast states create their own single-payer systems.

"He mentioned three states might be more powerful than just one at a time. And that will help, and we're fighting for that, but it does not have the economic power and the fairness of a full national system like all the other developed countries have," Huntington said. "We need standards that everybody in America follows, not just state by state."

Junction City High School students also asked questions about the proposed Republican tax plan and the na-

tionally, because I am in the Army Reserves, my commander-in-chief is potentially putting us in a situation where we're going to get deployed in a lot of different places," he said. "Every drill that I go to, I'm the public affairs officer, and I lose a lot of soldiers because they refuse to re-enlist. Because they don't want to deploy, when they are on active duty, they don't get paid very much. Think about getting paid \$200 dollars a month for hazard duty pay."

One question from the crowd concerned the relevance of the Electoral College, pointed out the evidence of voter suppression, and ended by saying, "This red state, blue state bullshit has got to stop."

Wyden said people concerned about hacking and voter suppression should support his efforts to take Oregon's vote-by-mail system national because doing so would leave "a paper trail for every ballot that's cast."

However, Wyden said that he has changed his mind about the usefulness of the Electoral College. "What's happened today because of modern communications in particular is elections have been nationalized — in other words, folks in Oregon watch the same television stations as people in Chicago. I support holding presidential elections on the basis of a popular vote," Wyden said.

Martinez added that his son and daughter will inherit current problems facing the country. "Besides what we are getting into with what our president's rhetoric is, we have issues with Medicare, health care, we have so many things that it's hard to decide what's more important because they are all important," he said. "So we're in trouble, and our senators, our House of Representatives, they are the ones that have the ability or the complacency to decide what will happen to us — to the next generation." ■

For a list of Sen. Wyden's upcoming town halls, visit [wyden.senate.gov/oregon/events](http://wyden.senate.gov/oregon/events).