

# Rep. Schrader: Congress isn't as bad as portrayed

By **CRAIG MURPHY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

The way U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader sees it, Congress isn't quite as dysfunctional as you may think.

Schrader, the Democrat from Canby serving his fourth term in Congress after first being elected in 2008, also praised ousted House of Representatives speaker John Boehner during a Keizer Chamber of Commerce luncheon Oct. 13 at the Keizer Quality Suites.

"It's not been as bad as the media portrays it to be," Schrader said. "We're not getting everything done, but there's a lot more productive stuff going on that the media doesn't tell you about. Boehner has gone out of his way to bring bills to the floor moderate Democrats like me can vote for. He's made a real effort to make it more bipartisan. That's been seen with regulatory changes for businesses and supporting energy projects. That's a good thing."

Schrader, part of the No La-

bels group in Washington D.C., feels the spirit of working together is present.

"There is pent-up demand in the rank-and-file to work together," he said. "Take the funding of the Homeland Security. We got caught up in philosophical debate about immigration. The bill was in danger. It needs to be done. The speaker reached out to Nancy Pelosi and we were able to pass a bipartisan Homeland Security bill."

Schrader, now serving on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has been impressed with what he's seen there.

"That committee has been a breath of fresh air," he said. "These guys have made a conscious effort to find stuff they agree on."

Another hot topic in D.C. has been funding and a new formula so new doctors for senior citizens can be recruited.

"Pelosi and Boehner got together," Schrader said. "We

passed legislation out of the House with more than 388 votes out of 435. That's huge for controversial legislation like that. They want to work together."

Along a similar note, Schrader said a 400-page health care bill was cut in half, allowing for a shorter process to get necessary new drugs to the market.

"Members want to work together on issues of significance," he said. "I give credit to the outgoing speaker. Compromise is seen as a dirty word. But in the real world, we should be trying to make it work."

Schrader finds it too bad Boehner announced his retirement from Congress.

"I'm sorry for the institution," Schrader said. "(Boehner) was trying to do the right thing against Herculean odds. That could be us (as Democrats). Hopefully we all learn from this tough exercise. It's a thankless job. I don't know what will happen."

When the question of

mental health was brought up, Schrader touched on the Oct. 1 shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg.

"The tragedy in Southern Oregon and other places has focused the need on mental health help," he said. "A guy from Pennsylvania is on the same committee as me and is really trying to light a fire. We're trying to do bipartisan legislation. We are trying to identify folks who are having trouble right now."

In response to a question from Bob Zielinski, Schrader spoke to the Russia/Syria issue.

"It is a quagmire there," Schrader said. "We could spend a lot of money that could go to education and spend it over there instead without a lot to show for it. We should play a strong supportive role. But it's time for other countries to step forward and take care of their own problems...We've got a lot more important problems in our own country."

On a more local level, one of



U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader talks at the Keizer Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Oct. 13 at Keizer Quality Suites.

KEIZERTIMES/  
Craig Murphy

those problems is the ongoing fiasco with the Columbia River Crossing between Oregon and Washington.

"The CRC needs to happen," Schrader said. "We are losing economic competitiveness. We are losing the container industry. We can't even design the damn Columbia River Bridge. We need to get it done. In Oregon the legislature has done a great job. Hopefully we can get Washington state to buy in as well."

A few weeks ago, Schrader saw the Salem-Keizer School District's new Career and Technical Education Center

(CTEC) facility on Portland Road in Salem.

"Workforce development was on the chopping block when I first got to Congress," Schrader said. "There was sometimes a disconnect between money being put in and the results. Not everyone will go on to get a four-year college degree. A lot of us baby boomers are retiring. We need guys and gals who are willing to step up and work in these arenas. The Salem-Keizer School District does a real good job of recognizing that not all kids will go the four-year college route."

## Proposed transit payroll tax explained more

By **CRAIG MURPHY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

So what happens if the Salem-Keizer Transit District's

payroll tax ballot measure doesn't pass?

That question was asked at the Oct. 15 Greater Gubser Neighborhood Association meeting following a presentation by transit board president Robert Krebs and board newcomer Colleen Busch.

"It would be status quo," Krebs said. "That would mean probably pushing it back a minimum of two years."

Measure 24-388 on the Nov. 3 ballot would enact a 0.21 percent payroll tax on businesses in the Salem-Keizer area. For a business with an

\$80,000 payroll, that would mean a tax of \$169. The tax is expected to generate \$5 million a year in revenue and would fund Phase 2 of the transit district's Moving Forward plan, which would restore weekend service, extend weeknight service hours and bring back a free student bus pass program.

Government organizations would be exempt from the tax, though state employees already have a .6 percent tax that also brings in approximately \$5 million a year.

The Salem and Keizer

Chambers of Commerce have been running organized efforts to campaign against the proposed tax, including TV ads and sign-waving campaigns.

Krebs said the services being sought to add back used to be offered before a funding shortfall.

"A few years ago we had a property tax levy that failed," Krebs said. "We didn't have enough to keep weekend service going. As a result, we went down to five-day service."

In 2009, the transit service schedule was completely re-

designed with 15-, 30- and 60-minute service depending on the stop and the route. Since then, a Portland-based firm specializing in transit system design was brought on board.

"They rode all the lines," Krebs said. "From that, last month we implemented Phase 1 in Moving Forward. Four routes are now 15-minute service, six are 30-minute routes and four are hourly routes. It means that if a bus comes every 15 minutes, you just go out and wait for it to come. It runs like that all day. Rid-

ership is all day long, not just morning and evening. It drops off at about 6:30 p.m."

Phase 1 also includes the West Salem Connector, which utilizes smaller buses that can more easily serve the area with a lot of hills. Riders can call for a bus, which will take them to the Glenn Creek station.

"It's the poor man's Uber," Krebs said, mimicking a comment made last week by Keizer mayor Cathy Clark. "At first it was two people an hour, now it's five or six people an hour."

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